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THE OLD TESTAMENT IN  
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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# THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY  
JOHN LEWIS, B.Sc.



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*PART I*

OUR AIM AND METHOD



# The Old Testament in the Twentieth Century

## CHAPTER I

### OUR POINT OF VIEW

#### 1. The Quest of Israel.

We are to attempt in a brief bird's-eye view to take in the story of the Hebrew people in their quest after the ideal commonwealth. The Old Testament is in effect the story of a great adventure. Whether we are reading its history or its poems, its sermons or its philosophy, the central theme is always the same—how out of all the tribes and nations of the world one emerged which felt the call of a high purpose and a sure hope, a race led by men of faith and vision whose one aim was to mould a nation according to the will and leading of God. The Old Testament is a tragedy because the Hebrews never did fulfil God's purpose ; one thing they attained, in part at least, they understood that purpose, and tried heroically to accomplish it, only to destroy themselves in magnificent failure. (See Diagram 2, Part IV.)

If our story stopped short with this failure we should still have an epic, compared with which the saga of the siege of Troy and the Odyssey are trifles. But our epic is a trilogy. The second part is the founding of the commonwealth of God by Jesus ; the third part is the history of the Church and its influence on society.

We are dealing all the time with the supreme problem

of life—the purpose of the world, the duty of man to his fellows, the society we ought to build, and the terrible contrast of frustrated purpose, neglected duty and perverted social order which the world of to-day presents.

## 2. What We Must Take for Granted.

We are anxious to get on with the story, and yet to avoid future misunderstandings and lengthy explanations we must pause now to make perfectly clear how we are using the Old Testament documents. If we were writing a social history of England we should have to use certain original chronicles and collections of documents; we should use them with discrimination, some would be more accurate than others, some would be biassed. The courtier, Sir John Froissart, in his story of the Peasant's Revolt, gives us about as reliable an account as a mine-owner would give of the coal lock-out; Karl Marx gives us quite a different story of the industrial development of the nineteenth century from that in the ordinary school history. Similarly, many of our Old Testament documents are seriously biassed, and we must take this into account in getting at the actual facts of the great Jewish experiment. Further, just as many chronicles, such as Hakluyt's *Voyages*, the biographies of St. Francis, and Geoffrey of Monmouth's story of King Arthur, entangle with a modicum of fact much legendary and mythical material, so our Biblical documents must by no means be taken at their face value. It is always what actually happened that we want to know. But even a legend has its value—as a legend. It reveals the ideals of the men who told it or wrote it. Even if Moses were as legendary a figure as King Arthur, just as the latter stood for the ideal of Christian chivalry against pagan barbarism which really was a leading motive in the Middle Ages, so the story of Moses and the Exodus witnesses to the faith of the Hebrew nation in its divine call and its God-given leadership. How much historic fact there may be in the stories of *Genesis* and *Exodus* no one will ever be able to discover.



Until after the days of David there was nothing but oral tradition, stories told by the bards and old men. One cannot talk of history until men begin to write contemporary chronicles; this only began in Israel after the monarchy had been firmly established.

### **3. Is the Bible a Scrap-Book ?**

The big discovery that we are making to-day is that the Bible is not a volume of illustrative anecdotes to use as examples of orthodox religious ideas, nor is it a systematic body of religious information and instruction, a sort of Koran, it is not even a code book of morals. There is not one consistent, uniform, religious system behind the Bible of which any particular incident illustrates one aspect. On the contrary, we have first a very crude glimmer of truth indeed, and more error than truth, and only in the New Testament do we approach anything complete or final; nowhere in the Old Testament is there truth in its fullness, unmarred by error. (See Diagrams 7 and 8, Part IV.)

Still less can we find exact religious information, plain statements of religious fact, texts and assertions that are of final authority. The Bible never pretends to that. At first, all that we have is what groping spirits in the twilight dawn of religion felt in their own storm-tossed souls. They were ignorant, sinful men, even though they were pioneers and saints, and while what they discovered and what they thought may guide us, it can never be treated as complete, as definitive. It is bound to be partial, mistaken in some ways, and to reflect the personal bias of the writer.

For the same reason the Bible cannot be a book of morals. Its early books will give us the crude standards of a barbarous age, and nowhere will the standards of Jesus be reached. What was right for an Old Testament character is by no means necessarily right for us to-day. As a guide to conduct the Old Testament is of very unequal value. It is a dangerously misleading book if we do

not remember that much of it represents a partially developed mentality, groping in the childhood of the world after truth, and grasping with some precious gems handfuls of falsities.

These considerations rule out at once any attempt to teach the Old Testament which aims merely at finding interesting and edifying stories, or which seeks for moral or religious inspiration in an ingenious exposition of isolated incidents. Much preaching from texts and modern Sunday-school teaching has been superficial and conventional in its outlook. We have gone to the Bible with our ordinary religious system complete, to find confirmation and illustration. The different standards prevalent in Bible times have made not a little twisting and juggling imperative. Modern criticism is making this method impossible.

We are not concerned with the Bible as literature or dogma, but with the history of a great nation, whose hopes and fears, laws and sermons, poems and chronicles are fortunately preserved for us. It is not the written word we care about, but the people.

We know now that the Old Testament is a story of discovery and experiment; life's meaning and God's will are being found bit by bit, and worked out in the Jewish state in a social system, in law and custom and daily conduct.

#### **4. The Importance of Selection.**

We shall soon find that the Bible is too big to understand unless we pick out the salient facts alone. To avoid confusion and distraction, to avoid swamping clear impressions in a sea of detail, we are going to select and reject. We shall pick out great types and crucial incidents, and ask the reader to take long leaps through the centuries, so that he may grip the idea of progress in Hebrew history. Also we shall sift rigorously. In each age we must purge the chaff from the wheat. (See Diagram 2, Part IV.)

All the time we shall be looking at movement and growth, not at disconnected incidents or immutably ordained action, but at cause and effect ; tyranny leading to revolution, false ideals to social decay, bitter failure to new vision. Our picture is a rapidly moving drama, and we must see it rather like a wonderful film in which the history of a thousand years, with its lessons, passes before us in an hour.

### **5. How the Hebrews Tried to Found Utopia and Failed.**

That sentence is the meaning of the Old Testament, but we must add the fact that God was showing them how, and that had they succeeded they would have been pioneers leading all humanity to its Divine goal. The Prophets are the guides, the Kings are the practical builders. The Priests embody in religious institution and social law the ideals of the Prophets. The fight is against materialism, apathy, personal ambition in the few men fit to lead, the pagan world and its selfish standards, its pride and luxury. And the whole significance of the tragedy for us is that it is Europe's tragedy to-day. We have not got beyond the temptations that wrecked Ahab and drove Israel into exile ; most of us have not got as far as the Prophets' diagnosis of social sin and their vision of the way out. The problems of the Old Testament are ours : hence its living value for us.

### **6. Is this View Unspiritual ?**

Not if by spiritual we mean righteous and true. We live in a world of men, and our first duties are towards our fellows ; to do justly and love mercy, to establish right relations with men—these are spiritual aims, and they are attained, not by seclusion and detachment from the world, not by seeking an individual duty to God, which is apart from our duty to man, but by recognising every call of social duty as God's command, which if obeyed makes us good citizens of His commonwealth.

## CHAPTER II

### THE METHOD OF BIBLE TEACHING

THIS book is not a class handbook, it is not complete in itself. It aims at giving a point of view, a general understanding of the whole. The teacher will not want to use it as teaching material; the understanding reader will not stop short at the last chapter. Both will want to go to the Bible and master the detailed facts which illustrate our theme. This book ought to show how to handle any worth while Old Testament lesson, but it leaves the details to be worked out independently.

#### **Drawing up a Syllabus.**

The first thing is to decide how much to teach. Don't attempt to teach the whole Bible. Pick out the salient incidents, the crises which bring to a head certain fundamental movements. One course will deal with the social and political history of the Hebrews as rapidly as possible in order to leave a clear impression of the rise and fall of the race and its relations with other peoples. (See Diagram 2.) Another course, perhaps with older children, will trace the developing idea of God through six centuries. Quite a different course will concentrate on one prophetic period, say the fall of Israel, and deal with outstanding personalities and incidents, devoting several lessons to each. This double method of rapid movement and comprehensive treatment on the one hand, and intensive study on the other, is the secret of good Bible teaching. It carries with it the necessity for rigid exclusion of non-essentials, and of careful selection of typical vital elements.

Life is short, and there are other books to teach. Besides, much of the Old Testament is only of archaeological interest, and is of no more real value than the legends of India or the laws of the Chaldees.

Choose your topics, and then take from three to six lessons on each. One lesson is not enough to give the amount of concrete detail needed to deal with different phases and to work out cause and effect. It takes thorough treatment to leave a deep impression and to grip the imagination.

It is, moreover, a great mistake to imagine that children must be spoon-fed, and that pretty and dramatic stories are the only means of awakening and holding their interest. If they are to get real sustenance from the Bible they must be given solid matter, something to get their teeth into. To give superficial stories without digging down to their real meaning oneself, or attempting to guide the thinking powers of the scholars, is to slight both them and God's truth.

### **Some Hints as to Method.**

1. Include in your lessons a wealth of vivid detail, adding supplemental information to make them clear.
2. Keep clear of abstract summaries, give concrete facts selected to bring out the significance of the stage in Hebrew history you are teaching.
3. Decide what to leave out—it will be about nine-tenths of your material.
4. Treat the remaining tenth with great fidelity and care; use the actual words of the Bible, not a hasty impression of what you think it says.
5. Finally, make sure that you have shown the imperfections, the new truth in contrast with the old, also contrast with later growth, and the way in which past events are influencing the present and the present the future. Don't forget the modern parallel.



The hero will often sum up in his life a critical stage in history ; " particular ethical principles and religious discoveries are understood best in the history of the men who fought for them, and the age in which they came to a head." But be careful to treat the hero's limitations sincerely ; he will grip all the more in teaching. The legendary hero without faults, or the plaster saint, has no real appeal. This is true of events too : right is seldom all on one side, and a fair, critical treatment, showing mixed motives, mistakes and human failings, will bring an incident or character to life.

### **The Supplemental Lesson.**

It is difficult to appreciate any event in different times from our own unless we know the customs, the dress, the everyday life of the period ; we ought also to be familiar with the country, the scenery and the character of the soil, the nature of the buildings. Sometimes a great historic people crosses the scene, or we are swept for a time into the whirlpool of world history. Any attempt to explain these things as we go along is doomed to failure ; either we shall be too sketchy and vague to be of much use, or else we shall crowd out our main topic. Special lessons are required ; and here again more than one on each subject, for as we have suggested single lessons do not leave a deep enough impression, and give no time for the necessary array of detailed facts.

The best plan is to give two or three whole lesson periods to the required supplemental material. Lessons on Moses will be preceded by lessons on Arabia and nomad life. Ahab will not be dealt with before we have heard of the Phœnicians and their religion. Egypt, Assyria and Babylon need special attention. The historical geography of Palestine deserves at least four special periods. The customs of the Jews, their daily life, agriculture and clothing must be understood. Lantern lectures are a help here, as are good models and pictures. All are now easily obtainable, and do much towards building up a solid imaginative grasp of the Bible story.



**Notebook Work.**

Notebooks are getting more and more common in Sunday-schools, but one wishes that adult scholars would use them too. They are a great aid to definite thinking and clear mental pictures of events.

1. Into such a notebook small illustrations may be pasted. (Correct illustrations, of course. Conventional pictures of Biblical characters attired in large sheets are still printed, but there are plenty of accurately painted pictures of high merit now obtainable.)
2. Maps and diagrams and time scales, to act as a sort of mental framework for the history, are indispensable.
3. Careful drawings from copies of implements, weapons, buildings, manuscripts, etc., should be made. In some cases models and raised maps can be constructed.
4. There is a place for the copying of great sayings and noble passages, if these are chosen with discrimination and not overdone.
5. Brief summaries and dictated notes are valuable in giving the pith of the lesson.
6. Finally, scholars should be encouraged to write their own views in answer to questions which really demand an understanding of the main idea; a page or half a page, in which a definite connection of events or explanation can be given.

**Discussion and Debate.**

The really stimulating teacher will not overwhelm his pupils with information and ready-made conclusions, but by his own questions and by questions drawn from his class, by discussion and debate, he will secure that mental alertness and that independence of judgment without which all teaching is in vain.

The view of the Bible taken in this book not only leaves

it to the teacher to seize for himself the moral and religious values, but it opens the way for the scholar to exercise a similar freedom of judgment. It is this freedom and this discriminating spirit which makes the whole study so stimulating and free from artificiality.

If this common-sense view of the Bible is taught from the beginning, puzzles of verbal inspiration and historical inaccuracies will never trouble the children at all. Such puzzles depend on a previous assumption of inerrancy and dogmatic finality which is not natural to the young mind, but springs only from superseded theological ideas.

### **Teachers' Training Classes.**

There are to-day hundreds of training classes for young teachers, adolescent boys and girls who are just learning to think for themselves. There is a particular danger of these classes dealing with the Bible too exclusively from the childish point of view and concentrating on the preparation of simple and isolated stories. The evils of such an attitude have already been pointed out. The best training class leaders, however, find in this gathering of young teachers a unique opportunity for interesting them in the wider issues of Bible study on modern lines and in its significance for our own life and times. Experience has proved again and again how such a class can awaken a powerful and living interest in the Bible and religion. But the Bible study should be quite separate from the story preparation, should have adequate time allotted to it, and should consist of a definite course such as one would draw up for an Adult School or senior bible class. This will have a marked effect in raising the quality of the teaching of the story, as well as greatly assisting in the development of the teachers, who are at a more crucial age than the children they are teaching. Notebook work is particularly valuable.

*PART II*

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT



## CHAPTER I

### OUR PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

THE only way to understand the Bible or religion is to understand our own time and our own lives at least well enough to see what problem lies behind them. That there is a problem goes without saying; the man who has not got that far is hardly in a position to start reading his Bible at all. What is more, life's problem is always fundamentally the same.

The eternal questions are something like these: What is it all for? What is the world becoming? What should come first in life? What should we reverence most? What ought we to serve? Why is the ideal so far off? Why is reality so cruel and yet our hopes so high? Everyone answers these questions either consciously or unconsciously, and the answers make up his philosophy of life, they constitute "the assumptions on which he habitually acts." A man's life is the outcome of his beliefs.

This is also true *socially*. A nation's social life is the reflex of a nation's inmost convictions. A sick and diseased world springs from the perverted aims of the world's soul. The class war and the world war, the degradation of our poor and of native races, the corruption of our governing classes and of the plutocracy, the rotting decay of our national life spreading into our homes and schools, our novels and our films, our petty ambitions and vanities, our private meanness and vice, our superficialities and vulgarities—all this springs from our beliefs, our secret gods, in other words, our real religion.

**The City of God.**

This may seem a very long preliminary to a discussion of *Genesis* and *Exodus*. Yet the legendary founder of the Hebrew religion was he who "looked for a city whose builder and maker is God." The leaders and teachers of Israel were *seekers*; they led their people on a great quest, on a great pilgrimage; they sought the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, forsaking the crude material aims of the pagan civilisations around them, to surrender themselves to the purpose of God. But let us note at once that this never meant that the ideals of Israel were purely immaterial and "religious," that the Hebrews were to become a nation of pious mystics. They sought on *this earth* a perfect social order; they believed in the realisation of their Utopia; but it was to be founded on the supremacy of God's righteousness in the hearts of all. Thus and thus only would God's purposes be fulfilled.

Their failure to understand when Jesus, their long expected Messiah, came confidently announcing the fulfilment of all their hopes is the greatest tragedy, the most heartrending apostacy in history.

No wonder that the rejected King wept bitter tears over Zion: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered my children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! *Behold your house is left unto you desolate.*" After that stupendous refusal, nothing but degeneration was in face of that great people. The fulfilment of their rejected vocation is still an open challenge to the ends of the earth and the people thereof.

## CHAPTER II

### PRIEST v. PROPHET

#### The Absence of Impartial History.

Let us remember that we have no history of the Hebrew people except that which has been written by modern scholars. We have no definite chronological presentation of the historical facts; no accurate and comprehensive record by some unbiassed historian. We have only "a collection of such literature of the Hebrews as has survived the political and social disasters of a people bereft of their land, and driven to the ends of the earth by wars of conquest and persecution. These records, as found in the Old Testament, are incomplete and fragmentary, but notwithstanding their deficiencies as historical material they present to us a brilliant and impressive series of pictures of life and thought in that ancient nation. There are breaks in the series, many and long, which only the imagination can fill, but in the wealth of poetry, orations, sayings, stories, visions, we find no lack of material for the reconstruction of thrilling situations, great political and religious crises, and social upheavals such as find few parallels in history." <sup>1</sup>

#### The Record which Survives.

The records of the Hebrews as we find them in the Bible are only their religious writings. Nearly all the secular writings, such as the official chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah, the histories of the wars, and most of the songs and stories of the peoples, have perished. (An

<sup>1</sup> *The Hebrew Prophets*, Chamberlin.



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interesting exception is the *Song of Solomon*.) The fragments that remain are biassed, and often represent only the narrow views of hardened ecclesiastics. Sometimes history is so little regarded that a reign as important and successful as that of Queen Elizabeth will be dismissed in a couple of lines. We hear too little of the lives and beliefs of the common people and far too much about the minutiae of temple ritual. If we blue-pencilled all the writings of merely archæological interest and also all the incidents and stories of very little religious value, such as the books of *Esther* and *Ruth*; if we red-pencilled all the extremely biassed ecclesiastical history, whether that had found its way into *Genesis*, *Kings* or *Nehemiah*, there might seem to be very little left. But even the ecclesiastical material, while it needs very careful and scholarly handling, is of great value, one-sided as it is. Moreover, what remains is of pure gold, consisting of nearly all the prophets, a wealth of vivid history from the brief records of Israel's rise and fall, with many passages of profound insight scattered up and down this varied literature. Gold-dust in much sand sometimes, but great nuggets at others.

### **The Conflict Between Priest and Prophet.**

The literature that has survived, and especially the type of literature that will interest us, reflects a great controversy, a great war of rival forces; we have the writings of two sides in a great war, and sometimes the record of a third party and its doings. One of the interesting features of the Bible is that it manages to hold in one volume such contrary points of view. It was because the instinctive religious feeling of the Jews really did see good in both sides, and feel that though outwardly contrary they were not essentially contradictory.

*What is this conflict?* It is the conflict between prophet and priest; reformer and constitutionalist; idealist and legislator.

We have seen that the prime interest of the Bible is its

story of an unfolding society, of the rise and fall of a social order, of a great and tragic experiment in commonwealth building. The men of action are naturally the leading characters in this drama; they and their deeds make up the backbone of it all. But they were never allowed to act merely as statesmen, as our business governments and political parties do to-day. Mere efficiency without any criticism of aim, mere success without asking whether it was success in virtue or vice, whether it added to the ultimate good of all or only the temporary glory of the few, was always challenged. The Jewish politician was made to feel that he was a servant, an agent for carrying out a higher will than his own. A self-willed ruler, a Henry VIII, was dismissed as a failure by the religious historian, no matter how brilliant his reign. Priest and prophet were at one there. A Cromwell was what they wanted. The Hebrew ideal may be compared with the mediæval notion of one emperor ruling the civilised world, and that emperor entirely subservient to the Pope as God's vice-regent on earth. The subordination of the Church, until it becomes little more than a department of the State, bound to support it, under its financial control, its officials appointed by the State, as in modern Germany, and to some extent in England, that is the antithesis.

But if priest and prophet were at one in wanting to subject the ruler to the will of God, where did they differ? It should be easy to understand, for this conflict is an eternal one; priest and prophet, orthodox legislator and revolutionary are still at loggerheads, and our study of the struggle in the comparatively simple Jewish state, in the clear contrasts of those times and with the brilliance and purity of the ideals at variance, will be of exceptional interest and value for us in the twentieth century.

### **The Priest.**

The priest was always constructive, empirical, constitutional. He was an organising genius with a perfect under-

standing of how to handle and discipline the crowd ; he was sagacious and diplomatic. He saw the value of constituted legal authority, of symbol and ritual, of mass impression by such means. On the other hand, he easily became worldly, his ideals fell to the level of conventional morality, he came to be suspected of vested interests in doubtful undertakings, he could tolerate any abuse that slipped through the wide meshes of his legislation ; he became hardened to ideals on the one hand and the prickings of conscience on the other ; the worst charge against him was that he had substituted the form of godliness for the power thereof, external acts of religion for genuine religious dependence on God.

### **The Prophet.**

The prophet, on the other hand, is destructive, revolutionary, idealistic. He attacks the king, the ruling classes, the venerable priests, the holy sanctuary, the man in the street. Violent denunciation and bitter invective are his weapons. He lacks any practicable constructive policy ; things are too bad in his estimation for anything but a clean sweep ; raze to the ground, and then think about rebuilding.

The prophet labours under a strong premonition of coming doom. His personality is so sensitive, and yet so stirred with emotion, that he seems mentally abnormal at times. Yet his judgments anticipate the verdicts of history, and thus demonstrate themselves to be in very fact the judgments of God. He is so intensely aware of the direction of God's purposes, and feels with such certainty just what is wrong and just what is right, that he sees in strong blacks and whites. No sham, no convention, no sophistry can delude him for a moment ; he tears lies to pieces, he unveils everything. His great antipathy is the priest and all his doings. Idolatrous substitutes for genuine religion, legal codes tolerating glaring abuses, ecclesiastical patching instead of social revolution, are the things he sets his face against.

Kings and plutocrats are neither feared nor revered by these iconoclasts. The diseases of uncontrolled power, "Divine right to rule wrong," wealth, luxury and exploitation, are denounced by them in unmeasured terms. "Bolshevists" they would be called to-day; and when one thinks of the awful slaughter instigated by Elisha and the ruthless dictatorship of Jehu, his protégé, the excesses of the French Revolution and the comparatively mild reign of terror in Russia are seen to be far less cruel and drastic. Never let us fall into the error of supposing that what is bloody repression in 1918 or 1790 is zealous godliness in the days of Elisha; it was as barbarous and mistaken then as now.

The prophets were communistic in their criticism of society, but, unlike the socialists, they brought forward no clear constructive alternative. They wanted righteousness and truth, and they knew exactly what they meant by these terms. They worked for the righteous society that we should term the commonwealth of God, and strove to persuade people, priest, and monarch to fulfil the purposes of God by unswerving loyalty to Him.

The prophets were bitterly intolerant of other faiths. They did not believe in what has been called "the League of Religions." They denounced paganism as untrue, immoral and corrupting. The pride, ambition and licentiousness of Israel were denounced as the result of regarding the non-moral or immoral deities of the heathen as equally worthy of reverence with Jehovah the Righteous.

This terrific three-sided conflict between prophet, priest and king continued throughout Old Testament times. Twice in the long history of God's people is the conflict stayed: once when Moses for a space united in his person the three-fold function, and finally when Jesus fulfilled law, prophecy and monarchy in His divine leadership.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PREHISTORIC AND NOMADIC PERIOD

#### The Making of a Hebrew Book.

The diagram on page 77 shows how the Book of *Genesis*, or some similarly compiled Hebrew book, probably came into existence. About 1000 B.C. we have various oral traditions which gradually consolidate into two main streams, one in the north, the other in the south, known respectively as J and E. These are eventually committed to writing (between 900 and 800 B.C.), and subsequently some scribe produces a third document based upon these two, partly combining them, this is known as JE. At this time, therefore, there is no Book of *Genesis*; but now the first compiler of *Genesis* itself comes along, he may have lived between B.C. 600 and 700. He has all the experience of four centuries of Hebrew monarchy and religious development to go upon. We will call him D. He produces a book from the three existing documents, J, E and JE, piecing together extracts from these sources, adding his own connecting material and comments. Of course, for all we know, he may have used other sources too, a collection of early songs, and other independent traditions of which he was aware.

This book remains untouched for some years, perhaps until the Exile. Then the whole book is rewritten by the second editor, whom we will call P. He writes from the standpoint of the priestly and legal reformers of Nehemiah's restoration. He may have deleted certain passages in the original book of which he did not approve, and we know that he added a large amount of material



written during the Exile. His editorial comments will be found scattered through the whole book. It is important to note that none of the editors will scruple to emend their predecessors' work, nor will they feel it necessary to indicate where the original leaves off and their own material begins.

We now have the completed book, but during the long centuries between the last edition, which left it in much the same form as we have it now, and, shall we say, the time of Christ, much may have happened to the book. In the first place, it will be copied many times, for each copy will gradually decay with use and the passage of time. The new copies will not only contain copyists' errors, but will also bear the marks of deliberate omissions and interpolations by later hands.

Thus any one chapter of our completed book will contain, as the right-hand side of the diagram suggests, a sort of stratification. We shall find portions of the original tradition side by side with the comments of priestly scholars who lived hundreds of years after the events recorded in these early sources took place.

### Some of the Different Elements in Genesis.

D.—The original editor-author, writing *circa* 621 B.C. from the standpoint of a critic of the monarchy and popular worship; a religious reformer.

P.—A still later editor-author brings out an emended edition with comments and additions reflecting the school of thought, placing special emphasis on the priesthood and distinctive religious customs.

JE.—A combined source used by D.

J.—Found in the above combined source and also separately. Called J because the word Jehovah is used for God. This source speaks of God in familiar human terms. The morality is crude.

E.—Found combined with J in JE, or separately. Called E because the word Elohim is used for God. Less vivid than J, with antiquarian touches, a less naïve view of God. Dreams and visions. Objectionable features toned down. Miracles recounted.

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### Examples of Materials.

- J.—God visits Abraham's tent. The wrestler with Jacob. Jacob and Esau. *Wind* drives back waters of Red Sea. Flood story. Tower of Babel.
- E.—*Miracle* at Red Sea. God never appears in tangible form. Story of Joseph toned down (ch. xx). E does not begin until ch. xi.
- P.—Genesis i-ii. 4. Lofty view of God. Ordinance of Sabbath. The covenant with Abraham. Genealogies. Less vivid and childlike in style.

### Myths and Legends.

Let us fasten our attention for the moment on the legends of the patriarchs. These stories, handed down as oral tradition and not committed to writing until after the historical records of Saul and David had been begun, represent the vague floating mass of tradition out of which a connected account of the Hebrews as a people emerged.

Whence come the English? Our historical records begin with Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (A.D. 700), before that we have a few fragmentary documents, a line or two from Tacitus about the Germans, Cæsar's *Gallic Wars*; everything else from Hengist and Horsa to King Arthur is vague legend, without chronology, without topography, without certainty—in fact, the more graceful and exact the story the more we surmise artistic skill rather than accurate record as its basis.

So with the Hebrews. A fog-bank obscures everything before 1200 B.C., and the first dim shapes that emerge as historical certainties are Moses and Joshua; before that we have only old men's tales. But even these tales have their value. They witness to the prevailing convictions as to their origin held by the Hebrews of the earliest period, re-written, polished, and carefully edited about A.D. 800 as a part of *Genesis*, "The Book of Beginnings." (The other part of *Genesis*, the Creation myths, were gathered from the tribal stories current among all the Semitic tribes of the desert and the Euphrates basin. They, too, were selected, re-written, and polished, and



drastically altered to reflect the profoundest prophetic thought of the sixth century B.C. They were as much altered and used to serve a later age's didactic purpose as were the Arthurian legends in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.)

### **What are the Origins of the Hebrew Race ?**

This is to be discovered, not from Genesis, but from ethnology. But Genesis will add to our scientific account certain hints of great value.

In a tiny corner of the big world, in a rocky, barren neck of land, hemmed in between the Mediterranean Sea and the great rift valley of the Jordan (sinking far below sea-level), a petty nomad tribe or group of tribes takes root. After long wars with the fierce peoples of Philistia and Syria, who give them no rest, they find that there is no chance of their ever being left to develop in peace ; they lie midway between the warring empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia, a buffer State, a nut between the cracker's jaws ; they have had the misfortune to build their city on a volcano, literally they have built it on Armageddon.<sup>1</sup> Yet insignificant though it was materially, it was unique in one respect, which justifies its proud title of the City of God. Alone among the nations of the world it felt the call to sever itself from dependence upon materialism and blind selfishness, and adventured along the way of truth and loyalty to moral law.

### **The Day of Beginnings.**

We must remember that we are only dealing with beginnings, it is a setting of the feet upon the right path and the face in the right direction ; it is the commencement of a pilgrimage, not arrival, the first effort in a long process of struggle, enlightenment, emancipation and disci-

<sup>1</sup> Armageddon is on the Plain of Esdraelon. Here Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, the Crusaders, the Turks, Napoleon, the Germans and the British have fought pitched battles, and here, according to the allegory of Revelation, the last battle between Good and Evil will take place.

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pline. But what matters the feebleness of the beginning or the preliminary crudity? They were on the track, and they alone. When we remember that even to-day not one nation in the world is on that track, not one organised community of men is even professing to put the will of God first, we see why the Jewish state may be regarded as a unique social experiment. A fire in a timber yard may begin with a very tiny blaze, and the proportion of fire to dead, cold, inert mass may be very small, but it is not usually regarded as insignificant. Pasteur's discovery that the souring of wine was due to a micro-organism conveyed by the air was but of slight value in itself, except to the perplexed wine merchants, but it is rightly regarded as momentous and epoch-making; it marked the setting of scientific investigation on *the one right track*; from it springs antiseptic surgery, the germ theory of disease, the abolition of smallpox, typhoid and Malta fever, the checkmating of malaria and sleeping sickness, the anti-toxin treatment for tetanus and diphtheria, and a vast alleviation of human suffering. If anyone wants to grasp the meaning of bacteriology to-day, it is still the best thing to read the life of Pasteur.

For the same reason, if a modern thinker wants to grasp the Christian philosophy of life in its clear-cut antithesis to materialism and superstition, let him not begin by disentangling the complexities of present days, but let him turn back to its first emergence, its first resolute intolerance of barely discerned error, and he will see its essentials more clearly than in any other way. That is why we study the Old Testament.

### **The Emergence of the Hebrews.**

The first Babylonian empire had risen and fallen back into decay between the years 3000 B.C. and 1800 B.C. The Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty (the first had flourished in rich culture about 4000 B.C.) was old and getting a little hoary, the Pyramids were already more ancient than present-day ruins of Roman villas and fortifications

in Engiand, when a fresh group of virile nomad tribes drifted westwards towards Palestine and Egypt. Some actually settled on the borders of Egypt, and were pressed into State labour in exactly the same way as native labour is forced to-day in Africa. These Hebrews found a leader of courage and initiative, a man with real racial pride, and he brought the forced labour of his tribe to an early end by the most successful strike in the history of industry ; they quite suddenly and completely migrated back into the desert, and the legends spoke of unavailing and indeed disastrous attempts to bring them back. Other great Powers have found it equally difficult to conscript Arab labour, and to bring to a successful issue punitive expeditions against elusive nomad tribes ; not even a Kitchener could, we imagine, actually have rounded up the Children of Israel ! (*See* Diagram 3, Part IV.)

This group of tribes remained in the desert area for more than half a century, living much the same sort of life as Arab tribes live to-day.<sup>1</sup> We shall have reason to dwell in more detail upon the peculiar unrest which characterised this particular tribe ever since they had surprised Egypt and themselves by that astounding display of independence and initiative. But apart from this strange spiritual fever, they were hardly to be discriminated from the various other Semitic tribes all pressing westwards, either because of an overflow of desert population, or because of pressure from Mesopotamia, or because after a cycle of wandering the nomad instinct was running down and a reaction towards settled life was taking its place.

### **The Philistines.**

The first Greek civilisation had fallen into decay about this time, the civilisation of Mycenæ and Cnossus, the wonderful remains of which have only recently been

<sup>1</sup> " It is now generally held that the ancestors of the Israelites were not pure Bedouin, but semi-nomads, i.e. breeders of small cattle and not of camels, and partly sedentary."—JOHN SKINNER.

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excavated in Crete. The most reckless and adventurous of the broken remnants of this Cretan race sailed off with all they could seize and became a wandering pirate horde, which, after threatening Egypt, thought the better of risking all, and settled on the southern coast of Palestine, bringing with them remnants of Minoan art and military customs and the lost language of their race. They were the Philistines.

The settled races of Canaan, the aborigines, were having an unpleasant time with the ever-growing menace of these predatory, incursive settlers, who, as always, proved more virile and enterprising than the agricultural folk they were about to oust. Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and Hebrews were all of one race, like various tribes of Red Indians, but they were absolutely different from the aboriginal Canaanites. One minor tribe amalgamated with the Hebrews—the Kenites, into which Moses had married; they lived at the foot of the sacred mountain known as Horeb, the deity of which was called YAHWEH. The Hebrews also united with a branch of their own people who had never wandered as far as Egypt.

### **The Hebrew Invasion of Palestine.**

While Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites were already carving out their destiny from the diminishing Canaanite territory, the Hebrews were wasting time, so it might seem, in certain new and strange religious ceremonies in the neighbourhood of Horeb. The rumour had it that they had adopted Yahweh (afterwards known as Jehovah) as their God. Inquisitive and interfering tribes found that the new religion had not enervated its devotees, for intruders were routed with extraordinary ferocity by a people convinced that their adopted deity was prepared to desert His mountain and do battle for them. The Jews returned to Horeb and talked a lot, and organised and re-organised and worked themselves up into a frenzy of dervish-like excitement; there were violent quarrels, expulsions, executions. What was it

all about? More rumours to the effect that a marvellous *nāvi*, or dervish of the God Jehovah was proving a chieftain of remarkable prowess, was developing a new religion, administering justice, re-organising the tribes, and planning a systematic invasion of Palestine. Some said it was the same man who had led the Hebrews in the great deliverance from Egypt, but that seemed impossible, for, if so, he must already be an old man, and how could anyone but a man in the height of his powers effect the organisation and discipline that this chieftain was credited with? His son perhaps.

Suddenly the Hebrews struck their camp, and, after a brilliant and thorough reconnoitre, launched themselves by a wide detour and a dramatic passage of the Jordan right at the centre of Canaan. There was something fanatical, yet something highly organised and skilfully planned about this invasion. It differed from the casual and careless eruption of the Ammonite and Moabite hordes in being systematic, disciplined and thorough. Other invaders were content to settle just as soon and just where they gained their first and most easily held footing; the Hebrews penetrated, besieged subdued and penetrated still further—it was a conquest.

The aged prophet chieftain was no longer their leader. He had only lived to see his armies approaching the frontier, to see the gaunt ramparts of their goal stretching from north to south, as far as eye could reach from the heights of Pisgah. There he had died, but his work was done; the years of solution, turmoil, and re-organisation had been his. The walls of Jericho were undermined beneath the shadow of Horeb.

The Canaanites observed that the advancing hosts of the invaders bore before them on poles a strange chest, containing, it was said, the sacred image of the deity, an object of terrific potency. They found in these Hebrews the fiercest Semites they had ever met, attacking, annihilating, pressing ever onwards, with a fanatical courage and a disciplined religious passion which nothing could



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withstand. And they shouted, priests and people, shouted one word with horrible exultation and faith. That word was JEHOVAH.

NOTE.—Advanced critics have sometimes reduced the Hebraic invasion to the level of the general Semitic drift. I am inclined to consider that the familiar tradition is nearer the mark, showing the invasion as planned and purposeful rather than haphazard and unconscious. One must admit the successive waves of Hebrew penetration and the entry at other passes besides Jericho, also the very loose character of the federation of the tribes and the rapidity with which the half-organised nation broke up into fragments as soon as it settled among the ravine and mountain separated districts of Canaan.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BIRTH OF THE HEBREW NATION

#### What Happened at Horeb ?

The crux of the whole matter was what happened at Horeb. Who was Jehovah ? What was this new religion which welded a group of Bedouin tribes into a disciplined invading army ? The above sketch of the differentiation of the Hebrews from the other Semites gives us the strictly objective view of an outside observer. There we have the bare historical bones of the matter, as a scientific student of race movements might picture them. Historically we can say no more ; there is no further reliable evidence. The mass of legends which was committed to writing some hundreds of years after these events in Exodus and other books can no more be regarded as reliable evidence than the Greek myths can be accepted as genuine information on the early history of Greece. But the stories of *Genesis* and *Exodus* are none the less of the greatest value. They give the key to the great mystery of Horeb.

#### Genesis : The Legends of the Patriarchs.

In the first place we have to ask ourselves whether the legends of the patriarchs throw any light on the traditions of the Hebrew tribes before the time of Moses ? Some light is needed for this reason : however great a genius Moses may have been, not all his genius would have secured the loyal adherence of the Hebrews unless they had had the insight and courage to recognise him and respond. Whence came those high qualities ? Treating



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our sources with considerable caution, we are led to wonder whether there can be anything behind that constantly recurring reminder that the Jehovah who became their national God at Horeb was the God, probably unnamed then, of certain legendary ancestors of the Hebrews, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The conclusion seems to be that the existence of these legends points to the reality of some higher tendencies and some great traditions among the Hebrews which from earliest times marked them off from their fellow Semites. What the actual facts were we shall never know. The skilfully told, detailed stories of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph are obviously literary creations of a very late age, but they do bear witness to the kind of thing that the Hebrews believed about their origins. What do they really signify?

1. That the Hebrews were originally a family clan, and that the original separation of their family from other families was something more than the natural breaking up of some big Semitic group. From the first there was a new ideal which drew them apart from others, and which drew them together among themselves.

2. That a great personality, the father of the family, took the lead. Someone, a certain outstanding individual, caught a vision of something higher than the animism of Arabia, or the polytheism of Mesopotamia and Egypt, gathered his folk around him, and cut himself off from the rout of unenlightened tribes.

3. That there was a felt incompleteness, a feeling of only just beginning, a yearning and an unrest which drove the pioneers forth as on a pilgrimage; but with it a new and wonderful sense of having come near to a great God, of having been called and found by some mighty Spirit with a father-like intention.

4. That every member of that clan felt a great awe at the personal overshadowing of that power. There was a sense of a destiny guaranteed, a providential guardianship, an expanding and glorious future.

### **The Limitations of Early Ideas of God.**

Let us admit the limitations though. This was most emphatically not a pure ethical monotheism. A God, one of the many gods, had called them and protected them. He had no name. He dwelt in sacred trees and stones, and was found only in these sacred spots. Belief in Him carried with it no disbelief in all the other spirits and gods : not one of the superstitions of the desert was discarded. Two points of difference, however, we must acknowledge.

*Was there not the dawning apprehension of a rational, consistently governed universe as contrasted with the quite irresponsible superstitions and speculations of paganism? Was there not a feeling that in the difference between right and wrong there was a moral demand which had something religious about it, that called to one as from a God?* This tiny glimmer would start with very little effect on thought, conduct, and religious rite. Custom is enormously powerful, and conscience can hardly check its momentum. But undoubtedly it began to do so. If the story of the sacrifice of Isaac is anything more than a very late story invented to discredit the child sacrifice of Israel in its latter years, it would bear witness to a new conscientiousness in religious rites. This God cannot demand, will not welcome in His worship anything which grates on conscience. This is a tremendous step forward, with the seeds of all future religious development in it. Most of the other stories in *Genesis* closely associate conscience and God. This was in primitive times something unique in religion.

The other note is the passionate belief in the personal providence which controlled their lives. They were called, specially singled out by their God, and they had a special task to perform for Him. If one would sum up the new element in religion in four words, one would say that man's new worship was of Righteousness and Reality, and God's new promise lay in His Moral Personality and His Fatherly Providence.

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But a beginning is only a beginning. Abraham was a dim ghost, a Romulus or an Æneas. Superstition, the pressure of Semitic custom, the drag of materialism and of shallow thinking, common to every age, spread like a rising flood over the incipient tendencies. There would be little more than a vague memory, faint flickering hopes in a few yearning hearts, an unusual conscientiousness here and there in the tribe. Truth, however, is hard to kill, and there were some who looked for the consolation of Israel and turned from mumbo-jumbo, from the religion of fear and non-moral childish rite, with sceptical and unsatisfied hearts to a desire for truth and reality, a love for simple goodness, and a hope for divine deliverance, which, whether they knew it or not, was a real communion with the one true God.

### **The New Leader.**

Common humanity cannot maintain truth or make progress without the drive of inspired leadership. It was the long ages of mediocrity which all but put out the flickering spark of truth in Israel. But meanwhile the tribe having grown, a wider net was thrown to catch a possible leader, a wider appeal was possible to win recruits ; the possibility of developing the new religion in a *people* instead of in an insignificant tribe had appeared. Simultaneously the grip of Egypt on Palestine was relaxing, Canaanite helplessness was increasing, and the moment for replacement by the vigorous desert tribes had arrived ; Israel would have allies, if rivals, in all the westward surging tribes already beating at the gates of Canaan.

Then Moses appeared. He was a *nāvi* or *prophet*, one who was in communion with a God. Among the other Semites a *nāvi* was a sort of dervish, but a *prophet* of the God of Abraham was very different. He was a statesman, a man who "remembered that there were people beyond the mountains," who could weigh up the possibilities of Egypt, who knew as much about the Egyptian province of Canaan as any other educated

Egyptian, and who could make a pretty shrewd estimate of the qualities of the desert tribes. He was a man of action, with a genius for organising and handling masses of men, and at the same time he was a dreamer, a man of impersonal ambition and boundless hope. Above all, he was a religious man, one who gathered into his heart every vestige of the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and meditated the development of those germs into a national faith that should make possible the realisation of those promises of a divinely appointed goal for the Hebrew people.

### **Horeb.**

Horeb, or Sinai as it is sometimes called, is probably one of the volcanic peaks south of the Dead Sea, and hence not far from the fountain of Kadesh, rather than one of the mountain groups at the extremity of Arabia. Here it was that Moses settled when he was driven from Egypt into exile and where he found and grew to love a peculiarly sacred spot, regarded with special reverence by a high-minded tribe called the Kenites, who probably shared a good many elements of Hebrew faith. The God of this place was called *Yahweh*,<sup>\*</sup> and He was obviously very similar to the God of Abraham; in fact, Moses soon decided that they were one and the same. In this holy spot Moses was led in his meditations to such astounding convictions and to the determination to attempt such vast possibilities that it was forever hallowed in his memory. But the plans he made here were not *his* plans, they were God's—that was the point. He felt that he had been holding a long colloquy with this Mighty Spirit, in which the future of his people had been unfolded, and in which he had been divinely commissioned as God's agent. It was in trembling awe that he descended to the plain to begin his task. Was it on his way from Horeb to Egypt that the peculiar significance of the name

<sup>\*</sup> Spelt and pronounced JEHOVAH in our English Bible. In future we shall use this more familiar form.

Jehovah flashed across his mind? It is derived from the Semitic verb "to be," and means literally "I will be." The full title of the Kenite God of Horeb was "I will be what I will be"; "I will reveal Myself progressively as I am faithfully served from day to day." <sup>1</sup> What better indication of the peculiar character of Hebrew faith could there be?

### **Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus.**

The details of how Moses delivered Israel, and how during the long years he welded them into a nation and gave them an organised constitution and religion, we cannot dwell on. The accounts in *Exodus* and elsewhere are not only very late, but are partly compilations of different strands of tradition, partly later and contradictory additions, and very largely the frank invention of the priests and legislators of the reign of Josiah (621 B.C.). No deception was intended, all Hebrew legislation, whether moral or ecclesiastical, was relegated to the Mosaic section of their library, just as all their hymns were added to the collection started by David. *Leviticus* was written long after the exile, in 400 B.C. And it was at this time that the Mosaic books were finally compiled, re-written and edited.

While the elaborate codes of *Deuteronomy* and *Leviticus* are simply impossible as indications of Moses's work, we can assume that he carried out a plan something like the following :—

1. He revived among the Israelites the faith of the patriarchs, and particularly the hope of their high destiny. He finally persuaded them to migrate as a nation from Egypt towards Canaan, in which they determined to settle.
2. He took them to Horeb, and there consecrated them to loyal devotion to Jehovah, the God who had sought them and found them, and who promised them His guardianship.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus iii. 14 : "I am that I am."—A. V.



3. He at once set in order the whole religious system of the Hebrews, concentrating it on one object, God's Holy Will.
4. He set up the ideal of right conduct as Jehovah's command, and expressed that conception in two ways :—

*Firstly*, by claiming the prophetic authority to instruct the people as to what was God's Will after consulting Jehovah. God's will not only for ritual and worship, but also for conduct.

*Secondly*, by judging between man and man according to righteousness as inspired by the spirit of Jehovah.

5. To this he added a rudimentary discipline and organisation through family elders and a concentration of sacred authority in the Tent of Meeting, a public gathering of the tribe, where the divine presence was vouchsafed in the inspiration of all national and prophetic counsel.
6. To the sacred place was added a sacred thing—the Ark of the Covenant, containing the sacred symbols of Jehovah and His protection. These, in true animistic and fetishistic fashion, would be held to be charged with magic power as a leyden jar is charged with electricity. The Ark with its contents was the sign of God's perpetual presence.

### **Mosaic Fundamentals.**

Three elements are of chief significance :—

*Firstly*, the refusal to allow sacredness to anything but Jehovah and the apparatus of His worship.

*Secondly*, the absolute obligation to do right as a divine command, and the revelation of right by the prophetic teacher.



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*Thirdly*, that obedience to these commands is the unbreakable condition of the continuance of the Divine Guardianship.

The whole subsequent evolution of Jewish religion is but the working out of these three principles.

### **The Religious Rites of the Early Hebrews.**

The religious apparatus and practices of Moses were probably of the simplest, and bore not the faintest resemblance to the Tabernacle and the elaborate instructions of Leviticus about the priesthood, sacrifice and ritual holiness. There was the Tent of Meeting, the Ark of the Covenant, the prophetic counsel and judgment as we have seen. To this we must add the feast-sacrifice on the altar of unhewn stone, a sacred family meal shared with Jehovah, and accompanied by thankofferings, celebrated by the father of the family or the head of the clan, and finally the simple spring festival of the Passover, which became a commemoration of their emancipation. There you have the whole of Hebrew religion in the nomad days.

The old sacred stones and trees and waters became spots where the divine presence might be expected to reveal itself, or else memorials of where that had actually happened; in particular Horeb was for years regarded as the home of Jehovah, who nevertheless was ready to accompany them wherever their wanderings led them, so closely and paternally had He identified Himself with His people. This was a new thing in divine beneficence, and something quite contrary to the rigid localism of Semitic polytheism.

There was a guarantee of progress, which we ought to note before passing from the Mosaic period, in this remarkable absence of that elaborate legalism which Judaism has so inappropriately fastened on Moses. Not only was the religious ritual simple, but the moral code was also simple and flexible. The ten commandments in their

present form did not exist—the golden rule was that there was no golden rule. God's will was not fixed and embodied in a law, which would have petrified it, it was constantly and freshly available for every new occasion through the personal medium of a prophet, that is of a man of experience, judgment and insight in intimate fellowship with God.

This is a religion of freedom and progress.

### **Personal Holiness and National Destiny.**

Let us try to imagine how these new ideals would emerge and gradually form themselves into a great *national* faith. First would come a higher conscientiousness with regard to moral demands, the pioneers of true religion were those who regarded the sacredness of righteousness as higher in quality than merely ritual sacredness or taboo, and as higher than the rights of personal safety or success ; very quickly that leads to the second stage, when the moral law, even in these imperfect beginnings, was felt to come from a moral legislator who was divine. Both this moral law and certain ritual obligations were regarded as the will of the God. But this advance not only separates the pioneers from those who do not feel the peculiar sacredness of righteousness, it leads to a yearning to see this law embodied in tribal life, obeyed socially as well as personally ; and thus the Will of God is no longer an arbitrary command, but a benevolent leading into a life of true happiness first for the individual, but also for the whole tribe ? *The Hebrews therefore feel that God in making known His holy commands is definitely leading them into an ideal commonwealth.* Finally, in the days of the last and greatest of the prophets they perceive that this destiny and guidance is not only for them, but for the whole world.

### **Later Returns to Primitive Simplicity.**

In after years, prophets and puritans looked back to this age as one of purity and simplicity. When sacrificial

rites were multiplying and the comparative ease and abundance of settled agricultural life was undermining the national virility, at least two societies were formed, which aimed at reproducing and standing for the old simplicities. They were the Nazarites and the Rechabites ; abstention from wine was one significant puritanism of these conservatives. Was not wine the very symbol of the corruption of agricultural Canaan ? The prophets, too, referred to the elaborate ritual of later and less truly pious ages as a sad contrast to the practices of these early days (Amos v. 21-26).

### **The Lord of Hosts.**

It is important that the first manifestation of Jehovah's presence and favour was success in a military invasion. He became and long continued to be a God of battles, and was so regarded by Israel's foes. That was to be expected in the childhood of the race. Joshua's belief in the tribal-champion-God can be both understood and excused. God did help them, He gave them discipline and courage and confidence. Above all, they had character and morale to a high degree. They were like Cromwell's Ironsides. It was the best they were capable of, and since they neither saw nor had the chance of seeing anything higher, they were morally uncorrupted by their ferocity ; they were defective in conscience, but guiltless ; in a limited way they did God's will, and therefore had His blessing.

What is the blessing of God but the clear conscience, as one labours heartily, the sense of security and communion whether one succeeds or fails, the uncorrupted heart open to every fine impression and finding the purest comradeship in similar hearts, and, above all, the single eye which sees plainly enough into the ways of righteousness and wisdom to discern at least the next step of the way ? This is fellowship with God and divine guidance, and we know that it was not veiled or forbidden by the moral imperfections of the days of the wars of Jehovah.

Yet, let us say quite frankly, that after the moral growth of centuries the type of mind which could condone them would be either a horrible perversion, or that type of imbecility which is known as arrested development. Enacted in our own day the deeds of Israel would rank as black atrocities. The massacres, the enslavements, the executions, the sieges, the assassinations—we condemn them all. From the murder of Sisera by Jael to the brutalities of David, from the execution of Achan and his unfortunate family to the dreadful vengeance on the family of Saul and the wretched Shimei, we must have nothing but stern reprobation in these days, or we can never teach the Old Testament.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SETTLEMENT IN CANAAN

*JOSHUA* and *Judges* tell the long story of conquest. The story of a barbarian horde settling like locusts on a fruitful peaceful land. Crude, superstitious, warlike, disunited and jealous, it is a painful story; it is full of lapses into the crude beliefs and customs from which Israel had emerged. Nevertheless, the essential faith is held unbroken. Jehovah is their God, and they ought to worship no one else. His command is righteousness, however crude their idea of righteousness may be. Broken into narrowly selfish tribes, they are yet one people, the people whom Jehovah will bless. However badly a Hebrew might behave, he never sinned in the wanton, careless, conscienceless way in which the Canaanite was driven wherever his desires carried him. The Hebrew always knew that he had sinned against his God.

#### **Judges.**

*Judges* is chiefly interesting for its moral and religious crudity, its uncritical morality, its narrow dividing line from heathenism; it is not a particularly edifying book except to the student. The prophet's voice is all but silent. Keeping a firm grasp on one or two essentials, everyone is busy fighting, raiding, building, pioneering, settling down amidst much unrest and turmoil, passing through a rather exciting metamorphosis from Bedouin nomad into Hebrew citizen. There is neither time nor opportunity yet for renewed education, for the divine leading to check, guide, and instruct through judge and

prophet, even though the Tent of Meeting has been erected at the sacred stone of Shiloh and the Ark of the Covenant rests there safely. It must have had its guardians, but even if they spoke prophetic words, everyone was too pre-occupied to listen to them.

The confusion and momentary check to moral and religious progress was excusable and of little moment, but there was one serious feature of the settlement which, although it seems almost inevitable, yet seriously undermined the essentials of Hebrew faith. This was the mixing with the Canaanite aborigines. Later writers, looking back on the whole course of Hebrew history, saw the awful consequences of the religious corruption this began, and rather unreasonably blamed their fathers for not carrying out a complete massacre. Even if such a ghastly proceeding had been right, it was of course impossible. While there was more cohesion and unity of purpose in the Hebrew invasion than in any other, it was nothing like one of Cæsar's campaigns. The tribes were only loosely federated, they attacked from different points and at different times, and while there was pertinacity there was no organised occupation. Further, few, if any, invasions ever succeed in eliminating the aborigines, especially when the latter are in few respects inferior and in some respects superior to the invaders. As when the Goths invaded Italy the barbarians had much to learn from the culture and civilisation of their conquered enemies, so the rough and warlike Hebrews had all the arts of agriculture, building and civilised life to learn from the Canaanites. It is very hard for soldiers to maintain indefinitely the high-strung ferocity required by the hate-mongers; the natural tendency is not for men to fight, but to fraternise, as our men of the Army of Occupation found on the Rhine in 1918; instinctively average soldiers get on very well with average men and women anywhere, especially the women; and the rapid admixture of races in Palestine should surprise none but a pedantic theologian; but then the history of these



times which we have in the Bible was often written by pedantic theologians.

No harm at all need have followed if only a Moses had been found, who would have looked after the purity of the simple nomad faith, and seen to it that it was held inflexibly in the face of the Canaanite animism, seen to it, if need be, that this animism was attacked and rooted out.

### **Village Baal Worship.**

But there was no one to see to this. The Canaanites, while rendering very humble service to Jehovah, the mighty War God, naturally enough saw nothing inconsistent in going on with their own worship at the same time. Jehovah was an important visitor, and that was all. Every village, every stream, every clump of trees, every field had its sacred forces of fertility, its Baals. These need regular stimulation and placation by various kinds of mimetic ritual. A mimetic ritual is a mimicry, a symbolic act, usually of a corporate character, setting forth what you want to happen. Pouring bowls of water before the cloud-gods to make it rain is a good example. This type of magic is common the whole world over, and is found in all primitive religion. Besides agricultural ceremonies, every kind of social relation from a war to a birth has its appropriate corporate rites. They are nearly all symbolic and mimetic, aiming at placation and stimulation; they are nothing more or less than magic charms for securing good luck and driving away bad luck. Sacred gathering-places and retreats, unusual natural objects, awe-inspiring places, such as caves and the like, are frequented by these *Baals* or magic forces. Certain objects or *fetishes* catch this power, certain people also become infected (magic power is fearfully infectious), and are potent for good or evil. The effect is to produce "taboo," or holiness in the place, object or person concerned. With the development of civilisation these crude beliefs do not disappear, they only become developed and

organised ; vague impersonal power becomes in part personalised in gods and spirits ; ritual and sacrifice become more highly organised, more elaborate and more symbolic ; an organised priesthood takes the place of the magicians ; but essentially everything remains unaltered.

### **Why the Hebrews Worshipped the Baals.**

It was primitive animism which the Hebrews found in full swing when they settled in Palestine (although more developed forms of religion were also present), and they were speedily persuaded in the friendliest way to perform their duties to the forces of the soil, in order to ensure, as heretofore, good harvests and good luck.

The Hebrew religion forbade the serving of strange gods, but it did not deny their existence, or say that other nations were wrong to worship them. The Hebrew was allowed to acknowledge the necessity for his Canaanite neighbour to worship the Baals ; it was an easy step to share in that worship. Had the religious leaders felt able to deny the existence of these forces and to pour scorn on the efficacy of the rites, the Hebrews might have been delivered from their peril ; as it was, they settled easily into the habit of sharing in the magic rites and beliefs of their neighbours. But the moral results were disastrous, and social decay followed as the inevitable consequence, fully justifying the wisdom of the first commandment.

### **The Waning of the Desert Faith.**

It would be a mistaken and useless course simply to deplore the waning of Israel's pristine faith. History is full of the passing of customs and institutions with the changing of conditions, the attempt to resist such change is always futile, the endeavour to restore the old never for a moment succeeds. What was possible and even necessary when the united tribes, under the leadership of Moses and Joshua, swept across the plains of Arabia towards the pass of Jericho was impossible when war

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had ceased. The national leaders were no more, and the tribes were separated by deep ravines and rugged mountains each in its little agricultural community. The influence of geography on social life is always potent, and the intense tribalism and narrow local interests of the numerous little Palestine communities is strictly parallel with that of the Highland clans or the hill tribes of India to-day.

Moreover, Jehovah had in the past manifested Himself solely in national movements and in times of war; in consequence the Hebrews found no particular use for Him under changed conditions.

There were spasmodic revivals, however, and the ancient faith was so deeply rooted that under the right stimulus it could be fanned to flame without difficulty. The conditions were national danger and military necessity, the stimulus was the fiery cross calling on the tribes in the name of Jehovah to vindicate their divine right to the Land of Promise. *Judges* and *Samuel* contain numerous instances of such revivals; the campaigns of Deborah, Gideon, Samuel and Saul are typical examples.

### **The Nazarites and Rechabites.**

But the times of peace present a serious problem, and one that is not going to be solved by trying to live like Arabs and pretending that Israel is still in the desert. That is what the Nazarites<sup>†</sup> did. They lived in tents; they refused to eat agricultural produce, including wine; they lived on goat's flesh, milk and the food of the desert; they denounced the life, the religion and the customs of Canaan, and called aloud for the pure worship of Jehovah. They were Canutes trying to stem the tide. Like all mere conservative puritans, as opposed to the progressive puritan, who conserves all that is living in the old, they were useless. They merely antagonised the practical men who saw that the actual agricultural

<sup>†</sup> The Rechabites were somewhat similar in beliefs. Their founder was a contemporary of Elisha.

conditions had got to be accepted. They were not in the least helpful in the cause of true religion.

### **The Necessity of Religious Development.**

What was needed was a wise policy of deliberate development and expansion; not revival, but adaptation and growth. The conception of Jehovah, His functions, His worship, the duty of His people to Him, and His part in their lives; all the old ideas and formulæ had to be broken up, to permit of the tremendous development of a new religious system to fit the new conditions.

#### **1. Jehovah Comes to Canaan.**

Jehovah lived at Horeb. He had accompanied them to a new land, the province of other gods, was He to withdraw until wanted in war? The Nazarite could only answer "yes." The progressive Hebrew had to do some hard thinking and re-arrange his ideas. First, local shrines must be found for His worship. A few traditional sites where the patriarchs were supposed to have communed with this very God were speedily appropriated, then other sacred spots of the Canaanites or their predecessors, monoliths, trees, stone circles or their equivalent, outstanding piles of rock or lofty eminences, hallowed by dim, mysterious traditions—all these were seized and became the shrines of the spirit of Jehovah. We even read of the existence of images or sacred symbols of His presence, treasured no doubt in caves or even special houses. Thus was the first step taken, and Jehovah became localised in every separate Hebrew settlement alongside the original local Baals.

#### **2. Jehovah Becomes Agricultural.**

The next question was, Has Jehovah anything to do with the local agricultural and social life? The Nazarite would reply with an emphatic "No." Now, there is no doubt that some of the new shrines of Jehovah, especially where Israel was strong and devout, were actually the

local centres of Baal worship. We intend to worship Jehovah here, was their decision. Would not the result be that men would come to regard the localised Jehovah as fulfilling the function of the old Baal? Similarly the local social rites associated with harvests, the spring, family re-unions, births, deaths and marriages, now celebrated either for the first time, or under conditions very different from those of the desert, would tend to take on the colour of the Canaanite festivals of the same character, except that the spirit who blessed the occasion would be Jehovah. This was the national War God in a new and peaceful guise, His military panoply replaced by the habiliments of village life. After being a God chiefly associated with thunder and lightning, a sort of Jove or Mars, He takes on a domestic, a rustic aspect, and is worshipped in jovial country festival and village gathering.

### **The Elements of Degeneration.**

Unfortunately, the transition lacked a religious genius to guide it. The example set by the Canaanites in their worship of the Baals was not the best to follow in expanding the worship of Jehovah. The jovial country festivals were more jovial than innocent, and there was nothing at all in the religion itself to effect the slightest moral restraint on the conduct of the worshippers, either in their daily life, or actually in the procedure of worship itself. In consequence the fertility rites tended to become licentious orgies, and the festivals periodic opportunities for the throwing off of self-restraint in popular social gatherings.

The defects of Baal worship we shall have constantly to refer to, they are plainer to us and were plainer to the prophets of later Israel than to the best type of Hebrew in the days of transition. All later history is full of eager impassioned warning and denunciation; later writers depicting these very times write as though the significance of these evils was fully apparent to contemporary Israel, and they were therefore both responsible and deeply



guilty. This is not fair, and the tone of Biblical history is very misleading. It took centuries for the Hebrews to work out and think out this difficult subject; it was not until two hundred years had elapsed that the movement to suppress the local shrines and to reform worship was taken in hand.

### **Excavations at Gezer.**

Recent excavations at the old Canaanite town and high place of Gezer verify the darkest suspicions as to the evils of Baal worship, and add a further horror. Things were bad enough in times of prosperity and peace, but what happened in times of disaster and war? Then the placation rites were intensified and the more riotous celebrations disappeared. The placation of devils is a gruesome business, and reflects the terror and desperation of the bad times. Human sacrifices and mutilation mark the culmination of the frantic measures taken to stave off ill-luck. Gezer is full of evidence in support of this fact.

### **Gain and Loss.**

Hebrew religion absorbed certain good elements. It brought Jehovah from the lightning-riven peaks of Horeb to the green valleys and undulating hills of Palestine, where He presided over the peaceful operations of nature and the cycle of family experiences, instead of over the trampling of the warrior host. But it introduced into His worship the dangerous practices of magic (only incidental before), and it demanded reverence for forces which were merely forces, non-personal and non-moral; or, worse still, it regarded Jehovah Himself in His new capacity of nature God as an uncritical, non-moral, impersonal force, to be cajoled and manipulated by magic rites. Now that conception, which underlies every type of heathen religion, and right down to our own day persists even within the Christian Church, is the very antithesis of true religion. The prophetic conflict with it occupies a large part of the remaining books of the Old Testament. (See Diagram 7.)



## CHAPTER VI

### THE FOUNDATION OF THE MONARCHY

THE Book of *Joshua* leaves us with a picture of an invading army filled with patriotic zeal establishing themselves in an alien country with ruthless treatment of the unfortunate inhabitants. *Judges* is a picture of turmoil and transition. Then follows *Samuel*, which presents a remarkable change. Conquerors and conquered have coalesced, yet the unity of the Hebrews has been broken up. Once again patriotic zeal is being fanned to flame, but this time it is Hebrew and Canaanite, in so far as they have fused, uniting in a common defence against a new invader. The raiding tribe has become the settled people, themselves resisting raids. Unconquered Canaanite centres remained (Jebus = Jerusalem, for instance), but on the whole the passage of the century had witnessed the same sort of fusion as took place in England between Saxon and Norman. The prevailing type and tradition, however, was Hebrew. Thus the close of the century which had elapsed since the first invasion marks a revival of that spirit of patriotism and purity and religious zeal which characterised the entry into Canaan. The direct stimulus was the Philistine menace; the religious and national leader was Samuel. (See Diagrams 3 and 4, Part IV.)

The time was now ripe for the birth of the new nationalism; the ferment, the readjustment, the transformation of Bedouin into Hebrew, had taken place. A great step forward was now possible. The Hebrews as a nation could develop a social and religious order of their own

that was impossible and undesirable on the part of any section or tribe.

### **Eli and the Ark.**

In spite of the demoralisation induced by the absence of a religious obligation to righteousness among the Canaanites, the essential of Jehovah worship had never been forgotten. Old traditions speak of the sins of Hebrew leaders of that day as obnoxious to Jehovah, and here and there among their village headmen and their leaders in war a faint echo of the Mosaic leadership remained, an attempt at judgment in the name of Jehovah, a claim to counsel according to His Word. The old tradition flickered on right through the century, especially at Shiloh, the resting-place of the Tent of Meeting and the Ark, perhaps at last here only. The Ark and the Tent were the strongest possible reminders, the most speaking symbols of the best that Jehovah had ever meant. The guardians of the shrine, pale copies of the giants of the past, still sacrificed and judged and attempted to speak the words of God; but it was a poor attempt and was relapsing more and more into the superstition and unethical character of contemporary religious leadership, until at last it blazed forth again in the person of Samuel.

The prophet among the non-Hebrew races was a magician and a discerner of good and bad luck, a seer. This was done by casting lot, by watching the flight of birds, by inspecting the entrails of beasts, and in other ways. These functions were afterwards performed by priests.

The Hebrew prophet was at his best very little of a magician. He was a family and tribal representative and leader, he was a just judge, and he was a counsellor depending for his decision on the Word of Jehovah rather than on magic.

This purer type was only revived after a serious collapse. In the time of Eli and his sons, of whom a later age said with justice that "they knew not Jehovah," it

had been apparent to all that the sense of contact and dependence upon God had disappeared, and with it had gone that discernment and insight, that discovery of the right way, which was termed vision, hearing and speaking His Word. *Some in Israel always knew when the word of the Lord was being spoken by His servants ; they knew even when they hated to hear it, and rejected its counsel.*

### **Samuel.**

Samuel, by his earnestness and sincerity, revived this true prophetic function, and in a circuit of high places judged and counselled and sacrificed. "Jehovah revealed Himself in Shiloh by the Word of Jehovah, and the word of Samuel came to all Israel," and "All Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah."

The national crisis which speedily drew near was the threatened break-up of all settled life by the growing power of the Philistines, and this occasion found the man. Samuel revived the old crusading spirit of Joshua and Moses. He had doubtless regarded the animistic corruption of Hebrew religion with abhorrence, though he was probably the first religious leader to stand for a distinctly broader and more agricultural type of pure Hebrew religion. This was an opportunity for roundly denouncing the unethical corruptions and calling for renewed consecration to God. The old spirit revived, and the Philistines were hurled back. Samuel was quick to recognise that his own temperament and declining years unfitted him for the rôle of a Joshua ; he was counsellor, judge and priest rather than general. He began to look round for a permanent military chief and national judge, to assume the leadership of the coalition, and, taking advantage of the awakened feeling of unity, throw off the Philistine yoke and secure peace for the whole country, and in so doing weld the scattered tribes, now ripe for this advance, into a nation. Samuel saw his man and seized his opportunity. Through him God spoke with no uncertain voice, and Saul was established as the first

king of united Israel. Our later Biblical records of this time combine at least three contradictory accounts; one of them (obviously influenced by a republican disgust for all monarchy) regards this step as a great mistake and against God's will. This point of view betokens a retrospect on the unhappy experiences of Hebrew history, dating from the days of Hosea or later. The facts were that a monarchy was needed, that God led and Samuel discerned His will, and that the result was a great step forward.

### **Prophet and Seer.**

This revival of nationalism was assisted by a curious outburst of great significance. Holy wars among the Arabs are, we know, fomented and inspired by bands of fanatics, known as dervishes, working themselves into frenzy by wild dances. These men are fervid patriots and intensely religious; utter devotion to their God and war to the death against his foes are synonymous. Now, just as the magician-priest of animism became the priest-counsellor of Israel, so the dervish band of the desert becomes the school of the prophets; such schools are badly named, they were simply bands of religious enthusiasts, given to ecstatic frenzies, who went about the country stirring up the Hebrews to a holy war against the Philistines. They would denounce the Canaanitish elements in religion (rather too indiscriminately) and recall the people to enthusiastic devotion to the Jehovah of the great conquest, the God of Battles. The Hebrew name for this kind of prophet is *nāvi*, as opposed to the seer or *roé*. The ordinary function of a *roé* was to act as a diviner or fortune-teller. Samuel, for whom the function of seer meant something far loftier, had at first to put up with the name, and Saul comes to him with a piece of silver to find out by magic where the lost asses are. But Samuel was no mere diviner. The term was obviously unsuitable now, and we are told that "he who aforetime was called a *roé* (seer) is now called a *nāvi* (prophet)."

Samuel led the nationalist-religious revival which was being stirred up by the schools of the prophets, and was thus a true *nāvi*. In his person this office became more independent and therefore more potent than it had been before. It combined nationalism, purity of worship and knowledge of the counsel of the Lord ; but it is separated from practical politics and the administration of justice, which now belong to the King, and it is distinct from ecclesiastical trammels because all the ordinary priestly functions are fulfilled by the official priesthood.

The way is now open for those great free witnesses to the truth who constitute the glory of Jewish prophecy. The schools of the prophets, like the Nazarites, tended to be a little unbalanced, fanatical and reactionary, and yet had a reputation for piety and holiness. People held them in awe and took what they said as inspired ; but they degenerated and lived on their past record. They were often found amenable to political influence and ready to prophesy whatever the king wanted. Their enthusiasm became steadily less religious and more fanatical, until the true prophets are more often than not found in opposition to them, and Amos is very particular to dissociate himself altogether from them : "I am no *nāvi* nor from the schools of the *nāvi*," he says,

### **Saul Among the Prophets.**

Samuel deliberately brought Saul under the contagious enthusiasm of these men, and the successful career of the new leader was due to the frank acceptance by Saul of their message and their enthusiastic adoption of him as Jehovah's agent. Saul was the servant of the Lord. God was still the War God, the Lord of Hosts ; religion, though it now definitely embodied more domestic and agricultural features, was still very one-sided. The war revived religion, as the European war did, but it was a revival of a one-sided and defective character. Yet "the successful founding of the Kingdom made it clear to all that the God who had once delivered from Egypt now ruled in Canaan."



### **Saul the Chieftain.**

The historians treated Saul very badly; they were always hard on failures. From an historic point of view his reign was an unqualified success: the strong, if rough-and-ready, political organisation, the new national self-consciousness and assurance, which characterise the end of his reign, are something far in advance of the days of Samuel. The permanent position and primitive establishment of the new king and his household is also a startling innovation, and marks a new era and the dawn of immense possibilities.

Yet fundamentally the religious historians of the later ages are right. They who had seen Nebuchadnezzar and Sennacherib, who had witnessed the conflict between the highly organised and specialised monarchy of late Israel and the prophetic party, and had seen the ultimate collapse of the whole social order, had suffered too much to deal anything but faithfully with the perilous faithlessness of kings.

### **The Mistake of Saul.**

Saul, for all his open-hearted enthusiasm, his courage and organising ability, forgot that he was the servant of another will than his own, and ultimately is found engaged in what every irreligious leader comes to sooner or later—establishing his own security, advancing his own popularity and prestige, jealous of anything which threatens his own supremacy, seeking his own ends. It is superfluous to add that when this had happened he "knew not Jehovah," and the Word of the Lord was silent. Saul and Israel knew it and feared. No longer loyal to pure right, no longer the servant of his people, no longer seeking in humility the way of God, there was no deep insight into events, no discernment of the way, no sense of providential guidance and divine support. There was despair and unavailing passion, wilful and blind fighting against circumstances, with any weapons, clean or base, to secure the gratification of his personal



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wishes His sun sets in gloom and blood, and the alienation of all that was noblest in the kingdom.

### **The Work of Samuel.**

In a pagan kingdom the frank selfishness of a monarch would carry with it far less moral corruption, for it would not be as with Saul, a sinning against the light, nor would it provoke a reaction that would drain the court of its best elements and engender repudiation and hostility in the noblest men throughout the country. For in Israel was a tradition and a living faith. Samuel had spent more energy and time in his long career in the less spectacular but more significant building up of a religious conscientiousness than in organising holy wars: he had always felt that this was not his work. To this side of the work of Samuel we must attribute whatever moral earnestness we find in Israel, and in David himself in the coming reign. We may be sure that the prophet who dealt so faithfully with Saul in his delinquencies must have been a potent force for righteousness in his capacity as national judge and prophet of Jehovah, as he moved up and down the land.

That his understanding of right was very limited we must of course admit. It did not forbid cruelty to enemies, it did not command mercy and forgiveness; it was its *quality of sincerity* rather than its *content* that counted. Firstly, it was always anxious to know the right; secondly, it was always ready to learn from experience and to acknowledge mistake; thirdly, it looked beyond personal predilection to a divine instruction which might contradict it; and finally, it regarded the moral demand as a sacred imperative, a divine command: the condition of divine guardianship was unswerving loyalty, and loyalty meant moral obedience. These elements were undoubtedly present, though not clearly and consciously perhaps, in the truest religious thought of Samuel's day.

## CHAPTER VII

### DAVID THE KING

SAUL left Israel at the parting of the ways. Another able and ambitious monarch might have led to a further decline into paganism and a kingdom as powerful as Syria. On the other hand, in spite of Saul's success, the peculiar lack of confidence which a country half religious and half pagan, half outraged conscience and half wilful rebellion against conscience must feel, might easily have led to disintegration and collapse.

But even before the worst days of Saul a new character appears, who is to consolidate the great task of his predecessor, and leave such a memory in Israel as shall make him the model of all successive leaders. Samuel is quick to mark where in his deepest spirit Saul fails, and he is as quick and vigorous in his choice of a successor as he had been in his original choice of Saul.

#### **The Davidic Traditions.**

The legends of David's early life are numerous, contradictory and obviously coloured by his great reputation. There are several accounts of his first public appearance, for instance, of which the most likely seems to be that he was a young soldier of shepherd origin, who had proved his valour and skill in leadership in several campaigns before he was brought to the notice of Saul, in connection with his single combat with a gigantic Philistine. He joins the king's bodyguard, where his personal attractiveness and muscular skill show him to have qualities far higher than those of a doughty warrior. About the same time Samuel discovers him, and directs the prophetic

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approval towards his career. Nothing more can be said with any certainty.

The fascinating stories collected for us in the Bible are based on popular oral tradition, but written up quite late in Jewish history, with the same freedom and artistry as the patriarch legends of the same literary period. They remind us of the tales of Alfred and Robin Hood. While we must always be in doubt as to their historical accuracy, they do show us very plainly, through the impression made on the popular mind, the kind of man we are dealing with. They also enshrine precious scraps of history, folk-lore and primitive religion, though overlaid with the reflections and comments of an age centuries later.

The story of Nabal and Abigail, of the well of Bethlehem, of the little lame Mephibosheth, of the vengeance of the Gibeonites,<sup>1</sup> reveal simultaneously the morality and superstition of a barbarian chief and the attractiveness of a warm-hearted, courageous, generous hero. That in essence is David. He massacres his enemies like a Zulu chief; he has a totem in his house, a sacred image or teraphim; he believes that a plague falls because Saul attacked a tribe whom Joshua promised to spare, and that God by oracle or lot tells him to murder Saul's seven sons in vengeance to appease Him. He believes that Jehovah's sphere ends with the borders of Palestine, and that heathen gods must be worshipped across the boundary. He regards the Ark as a fetish (sacred objects are full of magic power), the priests advise him of God's will by divination, strict rituals are necessary to conform to taboo or "holiness" as it is called, though it has nothing to do with real holiness and is pure superstition. For years he lives a brigand-like existence, fighting as the mercenary of the Philistines, raiding everyone but his own kinsmen with the savage's frank disregard of other people's rights. (Popular romances and school-boy morality still regard a raid as an adventure, utterly uncritical of the morals of the question.)

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xxi.

**David the Child of His Age.**

Like any other Eastern potentate, David has a large harem and is embroiled in all the squalid domestic jealousies, miseries and immoralities that this involves. In all this he is simply the child of his age, he is a barbarian, and we must neither assume that these things are not defects because they are in the Bible and are not condemned in David's life, nor regard David as morally guilty because he had not the same enlightenment as a twentieth-century Christian. His real defects must of course be acknowledged. His conduct with regard to Bathsheba and Uriah was an offence against his own moral sense, a sin against God, and he knew it ; his family troubles arising out of this lapse show a weakness and a favouritism and a refusal to face issues squarely, which brought even more trouble in its wake. That his treatment of his enemies testifies not only to the low standards of his age, but to a vein of vengeance and cruelty in his character, seems probable from his dying instructions to his son to punish Shimei. Yet David in essentials remains an example even to our day ; few of our own political leaders have got anywhere near him.

**A Man After God's Own Heart.**

He has that real simplicity and openness of heart that makes a sincere man, a man open to conviction, to instruction, to the lessons of experience, to prophetic guidance and condemnation—in other words to the voice of God. There is at the very bottom of his nature a consecration to the purposes of God which remains with him and at the springs of his actions all his life. Because of that he is his people's servant and not their master. Even failure is not altogether a blow to his personal pride and a thwarting of his personal ambitions ; it may be in the purposes of God, it may be the result of his own mistakes, hence it is either to be bravely endured or is a call to repentance ; in any case it is a challenge to

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humble reflection, to a deep searching of spirit and of events, to an earnest endeavour to find what next step God is leading to through this disaster.

David's character comes out particularly well in his relations with Saul and his slow winning of the whole people to his side. In spite of Saul's frantic jealousy and of great personal danger, he maintains an extraordinary loyalty and manifests a spirit that is both filial and chivalrous. He had opportunity, and he was urged to bring matters to a premature conclusion; he always refused. He felt instinctively that it was not God's will. He was prepared to wait. The period of waiting was not a period of idleness; that it was crowded with activity we know, that it was as full of reflection and meditation we may well surmise. All the time David was developing his own personality, gaining in experience and discipline, and building up a growing reputation; by his patience and loyalty winning the regard of the steady-going, conservative elements in the nation, as well as alluring all adventurous spirits by his courage and dash. When at last the tragedy of Saul reaches its climax there is no gloating over his fall, but a remarkable outburst of genuine grief and sincere eulogy. The local and tribal leadership that was ready for him he instantly took and used to the full; the royal throne, which he felt was not ready for him, he refused to grasp at: he was prepared to wait until opinion was more matured and circumstances more ripe. Once again the period of waiting becomes in his hands one of rapid development of all the factors making for his ultimate success. It would appear to be the most astute diplomacy; in reality it was nothing of the sort: it was the judgment of humility, honesty and insight; it was a waiting upon God for His signal. Eventually the crown of united Israel is offered him and he takes it. Every circumstance conspires to consolidate his position. Now is the occasion for regal authority, for daring action, for swift subjugation, and without hesitation or error those steps are taken



which raise him in a few years to a position of assured power.

*David's military and civil administration* was bold, thorough, and showed the touch of genius; above all it was inspired, it was prophetically guided, though this monarch was most often his own prophet.

1. First there was the rallying of the whole nation round his single-hearted, kindly personality. The discouragement of Saul's melancholy leadership was gone for ever.

2. Then came the brilliant campaigns, in which the army is organised. A permanent trained nucleus, a sort of pretorian guard appears, and certain able, loyal military geniuses emerge, who eventually assume responsibility for all military affairs and abundantly justify the event.

3. The greatest political and social move is undoubtedly the capture of the Jebusite stronghold of Jerusalem, situated between the rival sections of Israel, always suspicious of each other and easily reduced to quarrel and conflict. It became a rallying centre, even though on the territory of the southern tribes. It inevitably became the centre of national life, the symbol of unity and of an established nation. The transference of the Ark there was a stroke of religious genius; it meant that the most sacred symbols of their purest faith, reminding them of all that was most exclusively their own in religion, all that was most progressive and pure in their remarkable history, speaking of Moses and Horeb, of Joshua and Samuel, of religious purity and divine providence, it meant that all this was given extreme honour, made central, exalted, and at the same time attached to the new centre of national life and to the crowning capture of the new king's victorious career. David led the sacred procession, caught up in a prophetic and religious frenzy of exaltation, dancing before the Lord with all his might. His victories with his public honouring of the God of Israel gave one of the greatest blows that the local gods of Canaan had received. (See Diagram 4, Part IV.)



4. David also established an administration of justice which bore witness to his religious devotion to righteousness as the supreme expression of faith in God. He "executed judgment and justice with all his people." He judged personally as long as he was able, and then probably set up a circuit of justices. That the king had a reputation for impartial judgment and an immediate response to the grievances of his humblest subjects is shown by the method adopted both by Nathan and Joab of getting at the best side of David. They invented bogus cases of individual injustice and laid them before the king. He was undoubtedly particularly severe on cases of tyranny and the oppression of the poor.

### **David's Popularity.**

David was beloved, as all such men are. The personal loyalty of his own followers, and of the curious collection of outlaws, noble exiles, foreign adventurers and failures who gathered round him in the cave of Adullam, the astonishing devotion of the foreigner Ittai who followed him into exile during the great rebellion, all bear witness to the true sovereignty which his character expressed. It is noteworthy that when Saul slew all the priests of Jehovah but one, that one, Abiathar, with the sacred lot took refuge with David. There was a religious attraction too. It was that certainty that David was really responsive to an appeal to conscience that gave Nathan the prophet confidence to challenge the king's conduct in relation to Uriah, an appeal met with instant acknowledgment of sin and swift turning to God in repentance.

*David was the people's monarch*, a popular idol, the father of his subjects. Approachable, simple, humble to the last. The rudimentary court was more like the hall of a Viking chief than the palace of a king. But all that was soon to change, the materialistic politician was emerging, the astute, worldly-minded courtier; a military aristocracy was in the making, a plutocracy and a nobility were in embryo. These had hardly developed sufficiently,

however, to mar the idyll of the reign of the Shepherd King. "David perceived that the Lord had established him King over Israel, and that He had exalted his Kingdom for His people Israel's sake."

*Decline of David's Latter Years.*—In David's latter years we may trace other indications of decline both in the character of David himself and in the life of the court; but for all that he remains to the end a great and simple figure, majestic and fatherly, noble and deeply pious. The long speeches, reflections and poems of *Kings* are obviously not the actual words of David, but what a later writer thought he would have said. Some have doubted whether we have a single psalm from David's own pen; but it seems probable that he was both a musician and a poet, that he encouraged a school of religious psalmody, and began a collection of sacred songs which included compositions of his own.

Quite apart from all questions of primitive standards, moral delinquencies and even historical certainty about details, the traditions obviously point to a man of unique religious faith. Such religious qualities are not invented by authors, or born in men's heads; they are won in life and born in the experience of saints. This is pure religion, seldom attained by any man of action since, either among the Hebrews or in Christendom. Its primitive setting does not detract from the value of the picture: it enhances it, it remains of the utmost value for us to-day as an example of true faith.

That it should have been born in Israel and found successful expression in Israel for a lifetime, and set the ideal of personal holiness and public service for a thousand years, is one of the reasons for the unique character of Hebrew history and its permanent value for the inspiration and guidance of humanity.

David is always regarded as the ideal king. The very Messiah is called his Son. His throne becomes the symbol for the government of the Kingdom of God. He foreshadows Jesus Himself.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DECLINE OF THE MONARCHY

#### **The Fulfilment of the Mosaic Hope.**

The reign of David, rather than the more outwardly successful reign of Solomon or the later triumphs of Ahab, Jeroboam II or Uzziah, marked the culmination of Hebrew development and the fulfilment of the Mosaic hopes. No doubt the Hebrews idealised this Golden Age, but there was a reality behind their dreams. What is the picture they give us of these far-off days? A settled social system, an independent nation, materially prosperous, politically secure, a remarkable absence of class domination, tyranny and poverty, a remarkable measure of freedom and justice; little central government, great local independence, practical equality, freedom from taxation, no aristocracy and no plutocracy. When it was asked, whence this justice, this equality, this absence of social corruption, this simple normality as if Israel were a vast family, the prophetic reply was that it was the realisation of that divine purpose of which the patriarchs had dreamed. As a matter of fact it was more than Moses ever dreamed; it was the beginning of a new world order, a world Utopia. It had sprung from the chaos of nomadic social life, and it was the outcome of the subjugation of selfish aims and the enthronement of right, whether that was in the object of worship or the conduct of life. It was the fulfilment of these two conditions laid down by Moses: exclusive worship of Jehovah and obedience to His righteous will as an essential in such worship. This faith had, under the living influence of

men who by sincerity maintained a teachable spirit before God, steadily undermined the social and religious idolatry which is at the root of all social disease now as then.

### **Solomon in all His Glory.**

The age of Solomon marks a decline. It is an age of outward brilliance, of material prosperity, and of the kind of success that appeals to our own worldly age. Solomon was a type which the European of to-day admires. He was brilliant, he was witty, he was shrewd and calculating, he was a statesman and a good man of business, he was magnificent. We read that he was wise; no doubt he was, but man's highest wisdom is foolishness compared with the judgments of the simple who really seek the will of God. Solomon's famous judgment betrays more wit than judgment, too much wit for it to be anything more than a clever story, accurately reflecting the man and what was admired in him. He goes down to history as the builder of the Temple, but careful students remind us that he spent thirteen years in building his own magnificent palace, and in one of the courtyards he erected, as a sort of gorgeous private chapel, the Temple, which was completed in seven years.

### **Solomon's Foreign Policy.**

Solomon entered on a policy of foreign alliances and industrial development. The first was accomplished at the cost of compromising with paganism; foreign queens, with their followers, their priests, their temples and their gods, were established in Jerusalem alongside the Temple. To the humble Israelite it could only mean that in the eyes of the king these deities were as worthy of worship as Jehovah, even though there was no immediate reason for any Jew to transfer his allegiance from his own God. This policy was continued in the establishing of a circle of great fortresses, guarding every approach to Palestine, and was accompanied, of course, by a few successful wars, or rather strategic military moves, and a great

extension of territory. Important positions on the trade routes were thus obtained, and while commerce was developed and encouraged, so was the profitable passage of goods and trades *through* Palestine from Tyre to the new Red Sea port on the Gulf of Elath, a move immediately followed by customs duties on horses and on chariots. Jerusalem became a centre of exchange for north and south, and here goods from Phœnicia, from Damascus, from Persia and from Egypt were spread before the astonished gaze of a simple peasantry. Solomon acquired an interest in the merchant fleet on the Persian Gulf. We begin to read of gold and silver in abundance, of ivory, apes and peacocks. Great public buildings are erected, palaces for princes, that Israel may be as other nations. These are paid for by taxes, which had never been heard of before, and the cession of frontier towns. The expenditure grows so vast that Solomon makes a great innovation: he pledges the country's credit and establishes a national debt. There is peace and plenty in his reign—peace established on the basis of a cash nexus with all the surrounding nations. There is plenty—plenty for the well-to-do, that is—the country is much richer, even if the peasantry is poorer and is systematically and periodically impressed into slave gangs, a district at a time, to build the king's fortresses and the palaces of the nobles.

### **National Pride.**

Solomon and his advisers had one ambition—to make Israel less of a country cousin and more of an equal among the kingdoms of the Orient. This they succeeded in doing, and the Hebrews began to absorb with great facility the culture and the vices of their neighbours. One can imagine the change in the cities, in the very clothing of the people, in their daily habits, their food, the household furniture, the language, the sights in the streets. Did any lament the good old days? It was a great step from the simplicity and humility of David's day. Solomon



had organised an army of government officials, a Lord Chamberlain, a Scribe, a Minister of Labour, twelve Treasury Lords to collect taxes ; add to this the hordes of servants and hangers-on, the officers of the army and the priests of the new Temple, then finally the new merchant class, becoming great not through the social virtues, but through anti-social business qualities. There you have your aristocracy, living like a leech on the blood of the nation, drawing apart from the common people, as David and his court had never done. The old equality was gone for ever. (See Diagram 4, Part IV.)

### **Religious Changes.**

The religious changes are equally significant. The great Temple set all Israel wondering. Jehovah was honoured as never before. They were a little ashamed of the Tent which in David's day had sheltered the Ark, of the simplicities of their old-fashioned worship. An elaborate ritual and a great priesthood were now set up, partly imitating the impressive cults of Tyre and Egypt. Local Baal worship still went on, becoming more riotous, more unethical, more a worship of success. It is a significant fact that this is not the only time in history that the decline in religious simplicity coincided with a decline in social ideals.

### **Social Decline.**

Looking squarely at the social conditions of the country, one sees that riches have come at the expense of equality, culture at the expense of economic liberty, an aristocracy at the expense of a degraded populace, international rank at the cost of falling to the world's low standards, religious magnificence at the cost of compromise.

### **The Voice of Prophecy.**

There was one figure entirely absent from the court of Solomon—the prophet of God. No word of prophetic guidance do we hear ; the vaunted “ wisdom ” of Solomon



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is enough. Only once towards the end of the reign does a prophetic figure emerge. But it is soon apparent that prophecy has been very much alive, though silent and obscure. In north Israel the prophet Ahijah meets the young rebel Jeroboam, and in symbolic fashion tears his garment in pieces to proclaim and perhaps encourage the disruption of the kingdom.

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NOTE.—Diagram 7 is an attempt to show how various corrupt elements crept into Hebrew religion or under prophetic influence were eliminated. It must not be taken as authoritative; let each reader make his own version. Scholars would differ widely as to exactly where each corrupt element began and ended. The list of errors might be contracted to one or two main headings or expanded to include details, such as "*Worship of Moloch.*"

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DISRUPTION

THERE is something very pathetic in the break-up of Israel less than a century after its triumphant consolidation under David, a triumph not only for him but for the religious ideals of Israel since the days of Moses. There had always been a particularly sharp division between the tribal groups represented by Ephraim north of Jerusalem and Judah in the south. This cleavage seems to have been due to something more than geographical conditions, though the flattening out of the rugged Judean hills, together with the increasing fertility of the soil, laid north Israel open to the influences of foreign culture and at the same time left her more vulnerable than the Southern Kingdom, protected by its barren, rocky heights. (See Diagram 4 (*a*), Part IV.) Was it that Ephraim or Joseph represented that section of the Hebrew tribes which had wandered as far as Egypt, Judah representing a section which only united with the others later? Anyhow, it took David many patient years to secure the adhesion of the northerners to his kingship and to cement north and south into one people, and at the first strain they fly apart again, and henceforward pursue independent lines of development. The Ephraim tribes, henceforth to be known as Israel, always had a tradition of broader culture, greater accessibility, more freedom, and at the same time of easier virtue and religious carelessness. These factors explain her swift entanglement in the quarrels of the nations, her speedy overthrow, and her easy absorption into the nations who carried many

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of her people into captivity and settled down in Israel side by side with the rest.

Before its final extinction Israel is the scene of a brief soaring triumph under Omri, Ahab and Jeroboam II, a period of great prosperity swiftly passing into oppression of the poor, religious formalism and corruption, a period of horrible political anarchy, and the occasion of the appearance of the four great prophets, Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea.

The Southern Kingdom follows a different tradition. Its members are loyal to the Davidic dynasty ; Jerusalem is their capital, with the symbols of God's presence and His holy Temple ; they feel that they represent the real Hebrew nation and its great religion. That is a conviction that Israel finds it difficult not to share, in spite of Jeroboam's attempts to set up northern shrines with golden bulls as symbols of Jehovah and Omri's building of Samaria as a rival capital. The men of Judah, shut up in their mountain fastnesses, secure from the greed of the nations, escape many of the corruptions and military dangers of their northern kinsmen, but they develop a narrow intolerance and a racial pride which has clung to them ever since. Jerusalem becomes the inviolable sanctuary, their religious faith and observances unite them indissolubly to the mighty Jehovah. The formalism of the religion, the social and political corruption of the state, are not apparent to any but the prophets. The religious abuses, however, while at first tolerated, are afterwards the subject of two great reformations in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah.

Judah, in fact, proves altogether tougher than Israel ; it hangs together and survives defeat, invasions and subjugation ; it maintains its independence for over a century after the fall of Samaria ; it contains within it, at the end, a remnant of converts to the prophetic message : whereas we find not the faintest trace of any impression left by Amos and Hosea on Israel ; whatever was of value in their work only survived by being carried over

into Judah. The disciples of Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah greatly strengthened the patriotism and religious devotion of the exiles, and they thus escaped the disintegration which had overtaken Israel, and were at length able to return and re-establish the Jewish state on reformed lines.

### **Jeroboam's Revolt.**

To return to Israel, with which we are first concerned. The success of Solomon's reign had been confined to externals; the hearts of the people were turning from him. There was a growing feeling of resentment and rebellion among the freedom-loving tribesmen of the north. Under Rehoboam's harsh tyranny this blazed into wild revolt, and led by Jeroboam, the northern tribes seceded. The forced levies, the taxes, the tyranny of the nobility were too much for men who had been born and bred in the traditions of independence. Only loyalty to David's house kept the southern tribes from joining the revolution.

Jeroboam's revolt did not aim at establishing a kingdom of a fundamentally different character; it was not a genuine revival of the essentials of the reign of David. It was a blind protest against severe oppression and a narrow nationalism glad of an excuse for disruption. In consequence, instead of witnessing the rise of a model state over against the materialist kingdom of Rehoboam, we have a precisely similar kingdom, which in a few years is riddled with the vices of every corrupt society. Jeroboam was a rebel with a good cause, but he was not a revolutionary reformer.

### **The Northern Kingdom.**

The Northern Kingdom quickly consolidates, and under Omri and Ahab, two powerful and very able monarchs, rises to a position of great influence and culture. Later writers see nothing to comment on in Omri's great reign and nothing to admire in Ahab's. Jeroboam goes down to posterity as the man who erected rival shrines to the

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Temple and thus undermined pure religion in North Israel. The pure historian would regard this as unfair and biassed; he would regard Jeroboam as a sort of Cromwell, and Omri and Ahab as great monarchs, whose reigns merited careful chronicles. The erection of golden bulls at Dan and Bethel—as idols or symbols of Jehovah—he would approve as a political necessity; the tolerance of the worship of the Tyrian Baal by Ahab would be broad-minded statesmanship. The murder of Naboth was regrettable, but if the records of great monarchs contained nothing worse, history would be a vastly nobler record than it is. What English king lived a more righteous life than Ahab? And yet is not the religious judgment, ruthless though it is, right after all, and is it not abundantly justified by the verdict of history? In essentials the people of Israel ceased to put first things first, social decay follows moral perversion, and national extinction is therefore ultimately inevitable. The worldly success of Omri is hardly worth recording if it already contains the germs of a fatal disease. This judgment is sound. If it were applied to the history of Europe, how much would be left unwritten?



## CHAPTER X

### HISTORY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE conflict on Mount Carmel marks one of the great crises in Hebrew religious history, and therefore in the history of mankind. Too often the vivid and dramatic character of the story has contented us with mere story interest and has stood in the way of a deeper understanding. The real meaning of these events, moreover, has a closer connection with our present-day problems than the shallower view.

But before we can possibly understand the quarrel between Ahab and Elijah, we must try to see the strange and chequered history of North Israel in some perspective, to see it first of all as bare history, and then to look at it through the prophetic eyes of the author of *Kings*.

*Bare history.* What does one mean by a phrase like that, and how does such history differ from the Biblical record? The answer to such a question gives us the key to the situation. The Biblical account is not history at all, and does not claim to be—it is interpretation of history from a religious point of view. The *secular history* of Israel is a very different thing. What is more, it is extraordinarily difficult to write, since nearly all our sources are lost. But let us do what we can.

#### What Secular History Would Be Like.

Let us suppose that we are living in Samaria towards the end of the prosperous days of Jeroboam II, about 740 B.C., two hundred years or so after the reign of David.



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The Chief Scribe, or some official from the court, a commonplace but efficient man, not specially religious, but quite orthodox; not a radical in politics, but a steady, safe, conventional fellow, ready to swear by King, State, and Church. This man is required to set down a chronicle of his country's history since the revolution under Jeroboam I. What would it be like, and in what way would it differ from *Kings*?

In some ways it would be an extremely dull affair, rather like those "Outlines of History" we used to have at school. It would be a long record of kings and battles and intrigues and treaties, national policy, famines, commercial prosperity, public works, and so forth. We should hear very little of people like Elijah, but a good deal about the Temple and great public religious celebrations; reigns like those of Omri and Jeroboam II, of whom we learn little from the Bible, would be dealt with with the fullness given to the reign, say, of Elizabeth in English history; Ahab and his like would be spoken well of; Jeroboam's wisdom in setting up golden calves at Dan and Bethel would be commended. There would be no fuss about petty incidents like Naboth's vineyard, and no such legendary stories as the withering of Jeroboam's arm when he sacrificed at Bethel. Such historical records there were—*The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (not for a moment to be confused with the Biblical *Chronicles I and II*), and they are frequently referred to in the Bible. But we cannot consult them; they have been lost for thousands of years. Three striking inscriptions actually mention contemporaries of Elijah. Two in Assyria refer to Omri, one mistakenly ascribing to him the foundations of Jehu's dynasty; while the famous Moabite stone records Omri's victories over Mesha, King of Moab. These slight references are of the utmost historical value, being practically the only contemporary records we possess. The Biblical record, far from being contemporary, only gives us a few selected quotations from the real chronicles, made

some hundreds of years after these chronicles were written.

Carefully sifting out the historical facts derived from such sources, we can reconstruct the history of North Israel in something like the following way :—

1. The two kingdoms, separate in origin, history and tradition, are held together but for a few years under the political genius of David and Solomon. The separation is inevitable as soon as serious grievances arise. A forced levy and an undemocratic tyranny exerted by the Southern monarch is enough. The Northern leader at once consecrates special shrines for national worship to overcome the attraction of Jerusalem.

2. Four kings follow ; but anarchy and violence characterise their reigns, and there is no settled dynasty. Military adventurers usurp the throne. Two kings are murdered, and one burns himself in his palace in despair during a revolution. The chronicles of these stirring events would be long and involved, and for us quite barren. Fifty years passes in this state of chaos.

3. Two great kings follow : Omri, who built the new and strongly-fortified capital, Samaria, and Ahab, military chieftains of considerable courage and sagacity. They pull the country together, raise its prestige and extend its borders. The Aramean or Syrian tribes from Damascus, who had been harassing the country, are driven back ; Moab is crushed. Even Assyria hears of Omri's successes. Ahab establishes a useful Phœnician connection by marriage. Two minor kings follow.

4. Now a fresh period of revolution is started by Jehu, who establishes a reign of terror and massacre and stands for a fanatical kind of Puritanism. He stamps out Phœnician influences, social and religious. After two unimportant reigns, during which Syria again raids the country, the last great King arrives.

5. Jeroboam II establishes his country in peace and prosperity. The slowly approaching power of Assyria attracts all the attention of Damascus. There is much

wealth and some social discontent fostered by extremist agitators of a religious turn of mind.

6. Assyria now looms up, and a period of frenzied intrigue begins. Egypt, Judah, Phœnicia and Damascus all play their part, and the history becomes complicated. The upshot is that tribute is paid to Tiglath-pileser. The last King but one, Pekah, makes a desperate bid for revolt ; he fails and loses his life. Hoshea, his successor, makes a similar attempt. Assyria, under Shalmanezzer, and his successor Sargon capture Samaria, deport the flower of the community, and settle the country with Mesopotamians. The Northern Kingdom ends.

The full story, one must repeat, would be enormously complicated, and no doubt entertaining to those who love to reconstruct the past. One would suppose that the history of the quarrels of Indian princelings and Moguls would be of a somewhat similar character. Palace revolutions still take place, and the romances of Anthony Hope give us some conception of their excitement. Those of us who for our sins have had to attempt to unravel the tangled skeins of European diplomatic history know what a confusing and barren task it is. So would be any attempt to re-write Jewish history, if it were possible. Fortunately it is not.

### **The Value of Religious History.**

The reader must not, however, imagine that such a view reduces the value of the Biblical narrative and leaves it nothing to say ; on the contrary, the whole significance of the Bible lies in the fact that it is something different from bare history. A great subject—and there is no greater subject than the Bible—cannot be approached lightly or considered superficially, and we make no apology for checking a too hasty attempt to grasp the truth in *Kings*. What is more, we are going to ask for one more delay, and the most necessary for all, before coming to the heart of our subject.

In the Biblical narrative we are told that in the reign

of Josiah a book of Mosaic laws was found in the Temple, enjoining a concentration of all worship in Jerusalem and the abandonment of the local shrines; it also contained certain valuable ethical and social teaching. A religious reformation was the result.

Now, all Biblical scholars are convinced that—

1. This book is *Deuteronomy*.
2. It is not of Mosaic authorship, but was actually written in the time of Josiah or shortly before, i.e. 620 B.C.
3. The laws against local shrines were not thought of during the whole period of northern history and for four hundred years of Judæan history. During this time worship of Jehovah at local high places was considered right and proper. Then dangers were realised, and as a new departure these laws were made.
4. Therefore most of the *incidents* in *Kings* actually took place before worship at high places was condemned. No contemporary would have found fault with Jeroboam for setting up his golden bulls at Dan and Bethel. Amos does not criticise the worship of Northern Israel because it is carried on at the high places.

How, then, do we account for such passages as the following (2 Kings xii. 2 and 3): "And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord . . . but the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places"? This is a difficult puzzle, but once solved we can understand the whole book in a new way. The only possible answer is that *Kings* was not *written* until after the religious changes advocated in *Deuteronomy*, that is to say not before 621 B.C.

The writer of *Kings* introduced into his volume extracts from the historical records. These extracts do not condemn worship at shrines and altars all over

the country, but since to the author this was a bad and superseded custom, he adds his own critical comment to the extract.

There are other reasons for dating the compilation of *Kings* as after 621 B.C. The whole tone of the book is that of profound reflection on history that is passed. The collapse of the Northern Kingdom and the capture of Samaria happened at least a hundred years before *Kings* was written. It was as if a modern historian was dealing with the history of France and England up to Waterloo.

There are also traces of a second edition, with fresh comments and many alterations and additions, made after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

If we want to get the point of view of the author we must read *Deuteronomy*, remembering all the time that the very principles here laid down were the fruit of long years of bitter experience, were arrived at after witnessing the whole panorama of northern history from beginning to end and after four hundred years of Judæan history had elapsed. The best sub-title to *Deuteronomy* would be *The Lessons of Five Hundred Years of National History*.

After thoroughly absorbing these lessons, the author of *Kings* collects his chronicles, biographies and traditions, and writes a propaganda book ; he reviews and re-writes history from the new standpoint, and the result is utterly different from the formal history of the chronicles—as different as Mr. G. K. Chesterton's *Short History of England* is from Carter's *Outlines*.

### His Point of View.

The point of view of the author of *Deuteronomy* is a chastened one, a radical and anti-royalist position, in part anti-ecclesiastical. It is not the conventional or popular or orthodox position ; most people of his day would call him a crank. He is not yet a republican, but he is convinced that most kings have proved unworthy. He is not yet a Quaker, but he has little use for priests or pro-



fessional prophets. He is called anti-patriotic because he regards the national disasters as well deserved and the diplomatic alliances as all mistaken, and because he is anti-militarist. He is a radical social reformer. The orthodox historian of his day would not agree with his interpretation of the national history. Summed up in a few sentences, his position may be stated as follows :—

1. Israel is a people of destiny, and her prosperity is entirely dependent on strict obedience to God's commands as revealed through the prophets.
2. Kings and judges are the elected servants of God and people. They are warned against tyranny and injustice.
3. The welfare of the whole family of brethren, and not of individuals or a class, is safeguarded by rigorous social legislation :—

(a) Releasing debts and slaves every seven years.

(b) Forbidding usury.

(c) Enforcing regular payment of wages.

(d) Controlling the taking of pledges from the poor.

(e) Enjoining generosity in certain customs.

(f) Arranging for a tithe or poor rate every three years.

4. All pagan rites, including worship at local shrines, divining the future and self-disfigurement, are to be abandoned. The people are to be holy to the Lord. Worship is to be concentrated in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Do some of these decisions strike one as platitudes? If so, remember that, though they may be commonplaces for us, in those days they were discoveries, and that, *put into practice* and not merely held as theories, they might yet prove more revolutionary than one might suppose.

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller treatment of *Deuteronomy* see Chapter XIII.



The author of *Kings* accepts these principles, and with them a philosophy of history. His philosophy is briefly : a firm belief in the Divine Providence controlling every incident of national life ; every defeat or victory is of God, drought and famine, rain and wind-storm, are His doings, men are His instruments. God reigns ; each event is a direct divine interposition, and is therefore a revelation of God's will. In particular do the great crises show the hand of God.

Now, the modern man does not see God as the direct cause of each event : a storm happens by chance, a famine or drought is a matter of physical factors, not a miracle. A victory depends on the strength, skill and morale of the opposing forces. What have we in sympathy with the naïve faith of the author of *Kings* ? Very much. In minute detail we do not agree with him, in general we do. His view of the origin of droughts, his belief in the ravens which God sent to Elijah, his account of God striking an army blind, we regard with doubt ; but his conviction that in the great political and social crises of his nation the hand of God is seen and His nature and will revealed for all men and for all time we share.

The true prophet in every age is he who recognises the presence of God in the events, and particularly in the disasters of history and politics, not in miraculous intervention, but in the living presence of the Spirit in the working out of moral law in society. "The judgment of God is the verdict of history."

### **The Author Sets to Work.**

The author now sets to work. What are his materials and what are his methods ?

In all probability he used ten different sources, written and traditional, and besides his own hand we can detect the work of at least three later hands, who re-edited, added comments or further matter, or perhaps deleted paragraphs.

## THE SOURCES OF THE BOOK OF KINGS.

1. Excerpts from the historical chronicles of Israel.
2. Excerpts from the historical chronicles of Judah.
3. Excerpts from the historical records of the Temple.
4. Excerpts from the historical records of the reign of Solomon.
5. Stories of North Israel. Traditional stories of great antiquity.
6. Stories of Judah. Traditional stories of great antiquity (difficult for the author to fit into the historical framework).
7. The court history of David.
8. Passages from the biography of Elijah.
9. Passages from the biography of Elisha.
10. Passages from the biography of Isaiah.

With this material he builds up his case, re-writing, commenting, linking together, explaining and interpreting with his own pen and from his own point of view.

The stories from antiquity are of great interest. They are often as difficult to place historically as are the stories of Robin Hood. They are full of wonders and miracles, like most folk-tales. They are very doubtful historically and of slight religious value. But they are full of the crudities of primitive thought, and undoubtedly reveal the popular life of prehistoric Israel. A good example is the story of the prophet and the lion in *1 Kings* xiii.

The biographies of Elijah and Elisha are as full of legend as are the lives of St. Francis, and there is of course no historical verification of the many miracles. The very legendary character of the stories, however, serves to show the tremendous impression these men made on their generation, and perhaps reveals far better than bare history the principles they stood for and their effect on history, just as truth is often better conveyed in a parable than in mere abstract terms.

Let us therefore, making no attempt to rationalise

them or explain them, accept legends with all their miracles as a legitimate literary method of teaching religion, as legitimate as allegory or parable. But let us not feel constrained to accept these legends as historical fact any more than the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The difference between a legend and an allegory is, however, an important one. The legend is founded on historic fact, and the lesson it teaches is the real lesson of the hero's life. The wonder tales of St. Francis are founded on fact and do express the real spirit of the great saint. The stories of Elijah bear evidence to a great personality and to the religious mission which he accomplished in Israel.

It is to the mission of Elijah that we must now turn, and we shall do so without any further reference to the historicity of the events recorded in his life.

#### THE BOOK OF KINGS AND ITS SOURCES.

##### EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE SOURCES (CHAPTERS I-VII).

1. *The Court Chronicles of David*. Chapter i, narrating the last days of David.
2. Chapter ii, verse 2. The editor-author D takes up the story and recounts David's exhortation to Solomon.  
D = the Religious Reformer (after B.C. 621) who compiled and wrote Kings.
3. *The Annals of the Reign of Solomon*. Chapter iii. Brief introduction to Solomon's reign.
4. Chapter iii, verse 2. Interpolation of very late date explaining that the people sacrificed at high places; followed by a note by D condemning (quite unjustly) Solomon for worshipping at the high places.  
Other late interpolations are 1 Kings iv. 20. Notes on the great prosperity of Solomon's day.
5. *Temple Chronicles*. Detailed account of Temple in Chapters vi and vii.

And so on—fourteen different sources altogether, including documentary sources, editors and interpolations.

The above references show that when we begin to read our Book of Kings for the first chapter and the first verse of the second we are reading an extract from *The Court Chronicles of David*. We then come to a comment by the first editor, who lived in the time of Josiah. From this we suddenly pass to a long extract from *The Annals of the Reign of Solomon*, but this extract contains a

very late interpolation, probably later than the first editor. The editor now gives us a mass of material which he has obtained from the Temple authorities. We might go on right through *Kings* in this way, and indeed this is just what a modern scholar has to do in order to give its right value to every part.

Versions have been printed in which the different sources are printed in different colours. The reader might care to mark with coloured chalks various portions of *Kings* and *Genesis* in accordance with the hints in these notes; no better exercise in the understanding of the composite origin of the various books could be suggested. In order to make the matter quite plain we will construct an account of an event in English history from several sources, weaving them into one narrative.

### THE PEASANTS' REVOLT OF 1380

*While Robert of Scotland and the Duke of Lancaster were in conference at Berwick* (1) There happened great commotions among the lower orders in England, by which that country was nearly ruined. . . . The nobility have great privileges over the commonalty, the lower orders are bound by law to plough the lands of the gentry. . . . In consequence the evil disposed began to murmur saying "In the beginning of the world there were no slaves." (3) "Help truth and truth shall help you." "Now reigneth pride in price, and covertise is counted wise and lechery withouten shame, and gluttony withouten blame." "God do bote, for now is tyme." (4) *But* was the state of villeinage at all compatible with Christian ideas? And the social question linked itself with other questions too—with the question of Church and Religion for the oppressed and poverty stricken ones saw the richer churchmen, enjoying the fat of the land, while there was nothing but hardship and no Christian pity for themselves. Communism is theoretically involved in Wiclif's teaching, *but for the revolt* Wiclif was not to blame. Wiclif emphasises the supreme importance of man's individual relation with God. *He has been called the "morning star of the Reformation."*

*Not all the clergy of those days were corrupt, of many could it be said :*

- (5) This noble example to his sheep he gave  
That first he wrought and afterwards he taught.  
Out of the Gospel he the wordes taught;  
And this figure he added yet thereto,  
That if gold rust, "what should iron do?"

(6) And what are we to say of the parson's flock; they were sturdy Englishmen as yet unsoured by puritanism. Holidays centred round the Church and were not called after banks. Englishmen had religion in the blood, and all belonged to one communion and fellowship, indeed to be cut off from the Church was the most terrible of penalties.

- (7) But now is religion a rider—a roamer through the streets.  
 A leader at the love-day, a buyer of the land,  
 Pricking on a palfrey—from manor to manor,  
 A heap of hounds at his back—as though he were a lord.

(2) *What stirs one* is this deep undertone of sadness, the world is out of joint and the gaunt rhymers who stalks silently along the strand has no faith in his power to put it right; *note his pictures of a broad Hogarthian humour, and his bitter outbursts. Let us return to the course of events and* (1) In order that gentlemen and others may take example and learn to correct such wicked rebels I will most amply detail how the whole business was conducted. . . . *The story of its first successes, its excesses, the capture of London and the murder of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Tower, is full of tragic interest. Eventually the young King promised reform and the rebels dispersed, but when Parliament assembled* (2) it declared that his grant and letters were null and void: their serfs were their goods, and the King could not take their goods from them but by their own consent. (3) "And this consent," they ended, "we have never given and never will give, were we all to die in one day." (8) *Richard himself revoked the charters he had given before Parliament met, it is doubtful whether he objected to its decision.* (9) The point that must be seized if subsequent things are to be seen as they are is that Parliament certainly encouraged and almost certainly obliged the King to repudiate the people. There is already war, in this case literally to the knife, between the Commons with a large C and the commons with a small one.

*The incident of Wat Tyler's murder of the tax collector is significant.* (9) It avenged an insult to the family and made the legend of the whole riot, a sort of demonstration on behalf of decency. The dignity of the poor is almost unmeaning in modern debates; and an inspector need only bring a printed form and a few long words to do the same thing without having his head broken.

*But the serfs were not enslaved for much longer, the institution was dying and soon became extinct.* (9) The Catholic type of Christianity was not merely an element, it was a climate; and in that climate the slave would not grow.

In the above narrative nine different sources are combined, and the writer has himself added or subtracted a word here and there, or interpolated a phrase or sentence to link the parts together. Such emendations are printed in italics.

Careful reading will detect in some paragraphs archaic words and style which point to an early source; in others a modern ring will be found. A reference to Hogarth makes it clear that that part of the account was written later than the eighteenth century.

Even more important is the point of view of the authors. The first writes from a hostile, aristocratic point of view, another is sympathetic; one blames the King, but a subsequent paragraph blames the Parliament. Wiclif is described sympathetically from the standpoint of a Nonconformist, but later a mediævalist and



Catholic enthusiast describes the glories of the Age of Faith. In the final paragraph a brilliant stylist in a decidedly modern vein girds at the evils of "printed forms" and "inspectors." His arresting paradox about the "Catholic climate" contrasts with the restrained and balanced style of the historian's judgment on the revocation of the king's grants. Finally, in the sources themselves still older sources are quoted, giving the very words of the rebel agitators and the angry Parliament. In just this way is a Hebrew history compiled. In *Kings* the style and language vary unmistakably in the original Hebrew, the points of view are as diverse and contradictory as those in the above example.

The different extracts in the above compilation are numbered. The following list will give the corresponding sources:—

- (1) *Chronicles of Froissart*.
- (2) *Green's Short History*.
- (3) *Chronicon Angliæ* (quoted by Green).
- (4) *Clark's History of Nonconformity*.
- (5) Chaucer.
- (6) *Dearmer's History of the English Church*.
- (7) *Piers Plowman*, by Langland.
- (8) *Gardiner's History of England*.
- (9) G. K. Chesterton's *Short History of England*.



## CHAPTER XI

### ELIJAH AND BAAL

THE reign of Ahab was long and prosperous, the king himself statesmanlike and courageous. He was in some ways a typical Eastern despot, yet compared with contemporary monarchs he would rank as a model king. Why, then, do we find the prophetic ire of Elijah roused against him? Because Ahab had departed from the standards of kingship which the prophets had set up for Israel, standards differing in every way from those of the pagan world.

#### **The Jewish Ideal of Kingship.**

The whole question of government is raised by the prophetic doctrine of the functions of a king. For the religious leaders a king was a servant of his people and of God. His duty was to lead the people in doing the will of God nationally and socially, to execute judgment according to His holy will, and in His name to control the national religion and maintain its purity and fervour. In these three great tasks he is assisted sometimes by special guidance from God Himself, more often by the advice of the prophets to whom God reveals His will. Hence when any king regards his position as mere privilege and power, which by luck or skill he has been enabled to grasp and use for his own gratification, the religious consciousness is roused against him. Samuel denounces Saul, Nathan David, Ahijah Rehoboam, and Elijah Ahab. If the king wavers in single-eyed, impartial justice, to favour himself or his friends, or to revenge himself on an enemy, he has ceased to perform the true kingly

function, and is a tyrant to be deposed in God's name. This doctrine commended itself to the Puritans both of England and of New England in their struggles against Stuart despotism, while their opponents' doctrine that the king can do no wrong rather reflects the view of the apostate kings and prophets whom the true prophets are always denouncing.

Finally, any tolerance or encouragement by the king of false worship, any slighting of Jehovah, any failure to maintain purity of worship, was also a fatal lapse from the paths of true leadership.

### **Where Religious History is Biassed.**

Let us be fair to history, however. This clear-cut doctrine is certainly present both in *Samuel* and *Kings*, as well as in the Prophets, but was it as definitely present in the days of Saul and Ahab as these writings make out? The reply of modern scholarship would probably be in the negative. It was there in embryo, but the kings were not so black and not so white as they are painted, the prophets not so perfect, so lucid, so manifestly right. The people were more superstitious and barbarous than we are led to imagine. The issues were confused. The real history would reveal not so much the apostacy of a nation of saints as the painful gropings of a primitive people towards the truth. We have seen why. The records were written not at the time the events occurred, but long afterwards, when their lesson had been learned. The kings did forget their high calling, even though they were not so consciously rebellious against God as the Book of Kings makes them. They did make fatal errors, even if their consciences hardly reproached them, for they knew no better. The prophets were right, although their protests were probably rather violent and prejudiced, and certainly as extremist and one-sided as those of a communist against capitalism. The people *were* silly sheep, even though they had never showed themselves to be very much else.

**The Golden Age.**

It is an illusion of all reformers that the Golden Age lies in the past; that men were once clear-sighted and loyal and true, but have fallen; that the masses were once right at heart, but have been led astray. Social reformers look back to the Golden Age of Merry England, Guild Socialists look back to the days of the Trade Guilds, religious reformers speak of the Age of Faith when all men were religious.

Of course there have been achievements in the past from which we can learn, sometimes which we might do well to recover; but on the whole the Age of Faith was probably an age of credulity and superstition and of an external religion which had not that effect on character or challenge to conventional morality which is the mark of true religion. The truth seems to be that the world is still young, still emerging from superstition and barbarism. The ideal never has gripped mankind in any large numbers, and has only appeared to do so when it has so seriously compromised as to lose its real point and let in the unconverted, as did the Catholic Church in the days of Constantine. So the prophet is often found recalling the people to a faith which they have really not yet attained; his ideal is the true one, but his reproaches are not always deserved.

**Elijah.**

Elijah comes before us as a striking and dominating personality. He stands solitary against king, priests, prophets and people in contemptuous condemnation of the growing reverence for the Tyrian Baal. The worship of this god had been introduced into Israel by the King's diplomatic marriage with Jezebel, the daughter of the King of Tyre. A wise stroke of policy from a worldly point of view, to Elijah this is a betrayal of Ahab's trust as the servant of Jehovah. Elijah's policy is to worship Jehovah only, abandon any political alliance, however

desirable, if it can only be won at the cost of religious compromise. His attitude to other gods is one of fierce intolerance. His own absolute faith and confidence in Jehovah is tremendous. If Israel will only share it he is sure that it will be triumphantly and miraculously vindicated. His dauntless courage is shown again and again in his sudden appearances and fierce denunciations ; in particular he seizes the occasion of Ahab's murder of Naboth—a very typical act for a pagan ruler—to reveal the *moral faithlessness* to Jehovah which is obviously the concomitant of the *religious faithlessness*. In this incident Elijah sees proof that Ahab is no longer the instrument of God's will, but only of his own ; in the prophet's eyes his doom is sealed.

### **The Religion of North Israel.**

Elijah does not doubt the existence of other gods, but Jehovah is the only God for Israel. He has no objection to worshipping God at the high places ; he himself sacrifices without priests on Carmel. This shows that the source of the Elijah stories is much older than the Book of Kings, and belongs to the time when no prophet saw any harm in these practices.

The dangers of nature worship, local Baal worship, were everywhere, and the men of Israel were constantly being degraded by their contact with it. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that they were emerging very slowly from its non-moral or immoral toils. The Tyrian Baal was not merely a nature god. Tyre was a more civilised, successful and progressive nation than Israel. This Baal, let us remember, was the god of the great Phœnicians, the merchant adventurers of Europe, cultured, daring and enterprising. Jezebel was a relative of Queen Dido, the founder of Carthage. This Baal stood for the power they invoked to prosper their national ventures, to favour their navies, their merchants, their armies and their statesmen. Religion with them was magic ; it was a device for propitiating the powers of

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nature and the forces of fate. Worship was in no way connected with obedience to ethical demands, it was simply control over their god. He was to do *their* will, whereas the people of Jehovah were to do *His* will, and that will was righteous. That there were magical and superstitious elements in the worship of Israel we must acknowledge, but there was also a tremendous core of truth. Christianity to-day still has elements of magic clinging to it, a survival from past ages; but the truth that God is to be worshipped in rightness of spirit and in holiness of deed is steadily ousting the remains of superstition, though they die hard.

### **The Doctrine of Exclusive Worship.**

The instant the king surrendered the vital principle of exclusive worship of Jehovah, and showed by his conduct that he had also abandoned the ideal of the monarch who serves for mere selfish power, Elijah became the violent critic of the throne. We read that there were many other religious puritans, and that they had been harried and persecuted by the king. None of them had the tremendous personality, the dogged, intolerant zeal of that masterful prophet. In his policy we have the beginnings of that inveterate hostility of the idealist prophets towards kings, priests and orthodox prophets which marks the rest of Hebrew history. Elijah becomes a dangerous and seditious agitator from the standpoint of the court, but the king's conscience leads him to fear Elijah as much as he hates him.

It may be taken as one of the principal teachings of the Old Testament that true religion is against the kings, against the statesmen and their national policy, and against the orthodox Church; but let us remember what has been insisted on so often, that this view is the view of the tiny circle of prophet rebels who wrote the historical and prophetic books long after these events were over. It was not the popular view, not the view of the official Church, but that of a revolutionary minority.



The chief lesson of these incidents was for the author of Kings that of exclusiveness. There is only one kind of worship that will be tolerated in Israel, and that is worship of the Righteous God. Behind that conviction there was, as we have hinted, a great truth. Jesus was stating it when he said, "Ye cannot serve two masters, ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

It touches even to-day the very heart of religion. What is belief in God? Does it matter what a man believes? What we believe in is what we put first, what we depend on, make sacrifices for, trust in in the hour of difficulty. With some it is money, or it may be power or force. Nationally it may be "the Great God Gun" or the Big Navy. These are the modern Baals, and the point is that worship of Jehovah is incompatible with worship of Mammon or Power just because true worship is complete obedience to righteousness, whereas the worship of Baal carries with it no such condition. Many people attempt, like the Samaritans, to make the best of both worlds, "They feared the Lord and served their own gods" (2 Kings xvii. 33).

To worship God in church or in private devotion at one time, and at another to put first the ensuring of personal safety or national safety at any price, or the attainment of self-gratification or national aggrandisement by questionable methods, to such worship the prophetic challenge is always the same—God is not really being worshipped at all. What is fundamentally desired and believed in is not His righteousness, but our desire, and that is the thing we worship, whatever we think we believe about God and whatever sacrifices we offer Him. You cannot really worship two contradictory things at once. "How long halt ye between two opinions? Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."



## CHAPTER XII

### THE FALL OF NORTHERN ISRAEL

#### **Amos.**

The subsequent proceedings of Elijah and Elisha are remarkable. Failing to secure enough popular support and harried by the pagan queen, Elijah flees in despair to Horeb, the Mount of God. Why to Horeb? Because in the eyes of these primitive folk Jehovah was definitely associated with certain sacred stone, trees and hills, and particularly with those places where great manifestations of His presence had occurred—a victory, a mighty storm, a strange dream or vision. Now at Horeb, as we know, a great religious and national crisis had been experienced, and Jehovah was in these early days regarded as the local Deity of that mountain. This Jehovah had adopted Israel and accompanied the tribes into Palestine, revealing Himself at many sacred spots and in many notable ways (the great mountain storms of Horeb were always supposed to be divine manifestations, and hence Jehovah was thought to be a storm God for many centuries). Elijah therefore, in his hour of defeat, retreats to the headquarters and original dwelling-place of the national God. The vision of the future which dawns on him there has been interpreted in many ways, but its real meaning is surely best seen in the political activity in which it definitely results and the national disaster which is foreseen approaching. Earthquake and fire and wind must come first, invasion, revolution and social collapse, and then the “voice of silence” (not “a still small voice”). In the stillness of desolation man would

turn again to God. The disaster is actually to be furthered by the prophets, for the Syrian general, Hazael, is to be encouraged in revolt against his king, Benhadad, and Jehu is to receive the anointment of Elisha and to overthrow the dynasty of Omri and Ahab. The invasion of Hazael, which will follow his successful revolt, and the revolution of Jehu, which will plunge the land into anarchy, are to be the divinely sanctioned destructive forces to prepare the way for reformation. This is the interpretation the religious philosophers of three hundred years later gave to these events.

### **Political Support of Religious Reform.**

Jehu's revolt was followed by a bloodthirsty vendetta against the house of Omri and the supporters of Baal worship. An ambitious usurper and his political adherents take up the lost cause of Elijah and become the champions of Jehovah. They were dangerous allies. Just as the Protestant cause in France became in the time of the Huguenots simply a factor in the political intrigues of those times, so the cause of Jehovah becomes a political asset in the hands of Jehu's party. Jehu also allies himself with the famous "back-to-the-good-old-times" party of Jehonadab, that sour, strict, puritanical sect of fanatics who, reacting from the civilised customs of settled life as well as from the moral laxity of Baal worship, repudiated civilisation, dwelt in tents, refused to practise agriculture or live in houses, and rigorously abstained from wine—the Rechabites. The massacres of Jehu were of a bloody and treacherous character and reflected little credit on the cause he had espoused.

### **The Recovery of Prosperity.**

Israel's foes found the new dynasty less able to resist them than the house of Omri. (See Diagram 5, Part IV.) At first Israel lost all its territory east of Jordan.

Hazael harried the land, and the two thousand chariots of the mighty Ahab were reduced to twenty in the reign of Jehoahaz. There was no real peace in Israel until the slow approach of a new and more dreadful foe, Assyria, completely engaged the attention of Syria. At the same time a great King ascended the throne of Israel, Jeroboam II. He reigned for forty-one years, and in that time extended her territory, defeated her enemies, and made his country both powerful and prosperous. This prosperity, however, was confined to the rich. The poor and the returning soldiers found themselves bankrupt and their lands appropriated; it was an age of shameless profiteers and of upper-class tyranny. At the same time the renewed prosperity brought crowds of wealthy worshippers to the great shrines, and especially to the high place of Bethel, to celebrate their good fortune in festival and sacrifice. We hear nothing of Baal worship, but apparently the worship of Jehovah has sunk almost to its level.

### **Religious Festivals in Israel.**

A sacrifice in those days was not the solemn propitiation of later and more tragic times; it was a joyous feast. The worshippers gathered their friends around them and devoured the sacrifice themselves, a portion being conveyed to Jehovah by burning it on the altar. These feasts became the occasion of wild revelry, drunken orgies and extravagant luxury, and the very wealth thus squandered had been wrung from the oppressed peasantry. *This was the worship of Jehovah!*

The mirth and self-satisfaction of these religious festivals was rudely interrupted by the preaching of a new prophet, Amos, a Judæan shepherd from the edge of the southern wilderness. His fierce denunciations of this sham religious devotion and of the social abuses which corrupted society enraged the well-to-do worshippers and the priests of Bethel, but he went further than this.

### **The Sermons of Amos.**

In an extraordinary sermon which must have astonished his hearers, he began by pointing out to everyone's delight how the righteous Jehovah had interfered to destroy those surrounding nations whose cruelties and evil deeds were a reproach. It was in some ways a new idea that Jehovah should concern Himself with any but His own people, even to punish them ; but it was the foreshadowing of the great ideal of the world-wide rule of a just God. Amos unfolds a terrible tale of atrocities. Damascus had shown great cruelty to Gilead ; the Philistines had enslaved their enemies ; the Ammonites had slain defenceless women to enlarge their territory ; Moab had cruelly put to death the King of Edom. All these wrongs have in turn brought down the judgment of the righteous God ; and the crowd of Israelites applauds. Suddenly the prophet draws an unwelcome conclusion : If God's judgment has fallen on these nations, what will He do to Israel to punish her for her oppression of the poor, her licentiousness, her heartless luxury, her sham religion, *her atrocities*.

But this is unthinkable. Israel is God's own people, and His sovereignty has been loyally acknowledged by them.

The reply of Amos is : " The greater your privilege, the greater your responsibilities. To whom much is given, from him much shall be expected." Hence their evil courses are even more deserving of chastisement than those of their neighbours who had not had their chances.

" But is not our very prosperity a sign of God's favour ? " they ask. " Is not the day of the Lord at hand when He will even more abundantly bless us and bring confusion to our foes ? " Amos, however, sees little to be proud of in a prosperity that is bought at the cost of poverty—this is not of God and its end is near ; such success is that of the wicked, it flourisheth for a little time and is cut down. The day of the Lord is at hand, but when God comes it will be to destroy them. Amos

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has no word but that of final condemnation and gloomy foreboding; their fate is sealed, their awful sins have brought them to *destruction at the hands of their own God, because He is righteous.*

The father punishes his own child *because he is just.*

### **Amos Rejected.**

This is a staggering thought to Israel; little wonder that they cannot take it in. Amos is publicly accused of sedition in the royal sanctuary by the priest: "The land was not able to bear all his words." Because Amos claims to speak with divine authority, the priest confuses him with the orthodox religious teachers or prophets; but Amos indignantly repudiates any connection with organised religion, and asserts that he is a layman to whom God's coming judgment has been revealed, for the Lord will never smite without first revealing His secret to His prophets.

### **The Origin of Written Prophecy.**

There is no doubt that Amos was not listened to, but was persecuted and driven back to Judah. But it seems likely that he made converts, and perhaps founded a little body of disciples who preserved his teachings in the Southern Kingdom. Since no one would listen to his sermons, they were committed to writing, and in this form exerted a profound influence over the more thoughtful and sincere of his countrymen for many centuries. In the Book of *Amos* we have in the twentieth century the very words of this ancient preacher of social justice and prophet of doom spoken two thousand years ago.

Amos was the first prophet or teacher of Israel to write his message, and his prophecies are therefore among the oldest writings in the Bible. This little book was probably written before *Kings* and *Deuteronomy*, and certainly before *Genesis* and *Exodus* in the form in which we have them.

The first written religious message, therefore, was the pronouncement of God's doom on His own people. This



is a characteristic note of the great Hebrew prophets, and one which influenced all subsequent thinking and writing among the religious teachers and reformers of Israel. It is a truth that even in Christian times religious people believe with difficulty and easily forget. That God could destroy the corrupt empires of the Middle Ages in spite of their orthodoxy and their powerful Roman Church, that God could destroy western civilisation with its great churches, its traditional and widespread Christian faith, is to some people unthinkable. The only reply is : read Amos and discern the signs of the times.

### **The Prophetic Consciousness.**

We have not attempted yet to say very much about the prophetic consciousness, because it is best to consider an actual example first ; but something must be said, for it is the most remarkable phenomenon of Hebrew history. The old idea that the prophet was little more than a seer or diviner of coming events we have long discarded. He was primarily an ethical teacher and a social reformer, but he carried the roots of his principles deep down into religion ; his criticisms and constructive ideals alike were founded on the judgments of the God of Righteousness, not on an abstract theory or on individual speculations.

The prophet was confident of God's personal dealings with men in the crises of history, and equally sure that he had discerned the true meaning of events, was judging rightly, and foreseeing probable or even certain eventualities. The prophet looked upon the tangled history of his times and said : " I can see all this as the coherent workings of providence—God's lesson through events is clear to His servants the prophets, and through them is made clear to men."

### **Prophetic Premonitions and Visions.**

But the prophet was more than an historical philosopher. He undoubtedly had deep premonitions of approaching doom which he ascribed to the direct voice of God. This



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would be accompanied by real and very startling visions, such as those described in Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah. That these visions were real we cannot doubt, but modern psychology suggests their origin: they were subjective mental disturbances and not miraculous revelations. The study of psycho-analysis has shown us that genius works through the unconscious as well as through the conscious mind; the poet's vivid imagery and wonderful use of metaphor is not hammered out consciously like a mathematical problem, but leaps out of the unconscious. This does not mean that the soil of the unconscious need not be specially fertile and carefully tilled, it invariably is. The fact is that, prepared by conscious effort, the unconscious produces more than the normal consciousness ever can—loftier visions, nobler harmonies, more perfect beauty. The psychologists go on to say that appreciation of genius requires in us that unconscious sympathy and understanding that "gives thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

In particular, the unconscious in dreams, visions, poetic figures and pictorial images presses up into consciousness the message with which it is filled. The result may be a poem, a picture, a strange dream, or even a symbolic vision.

While most people have minor unconscious activities of this sort, it is only in abnormal cases that it is so well marked. Where such abnormal cases are the result of deep sensitiveness and controlled by a disciplined mind, and are the fruit of the experiences of a noble soul, the result is genius; where the sensitiveness is that of disease, where control is absent, and the experiences are those of a morbid character, the result may be insanity.

It will be seen that this in no way depreciates the value of artistic or religious genius; it only links the prophetic consciousness to that of all forms of genius and shows the way in which gifted personalities work—the gifts, the qualities of character, the insight, the sensitiveness and the discipline which go to make up genius remain as unique and as admirable as ever.

### **Are Visions Miraculous ?**

The danger has been in recent days to overlook the significance of the prophet's premonitions and visions, because they seemed too miraculous and fantastic for our critical judgment. We see now that they are not strictly speaking miraculous, and that they have a profound meaning. We have no prophets of this order to-day, because it takes the peculiar mental and religious atmosphere of Israel in those distant years to produce men of that type. Religious genius works in different ways to-day ; but it may be just as valuable as that of Amos, and its essence will still be an ethical and social criticism based on religious principles, founded on a knowledge of God's will ; it will still see in the events of history the judgments of God, it will still have premonitions of catastrophe and a sense of overruling Providence in all things.

### **Hosea.**

Amos was followed by another prophet, Hosea, who pleaded for reformation with a new note of pity. His thoughts were inspired by his own loving patience with an erring wife, and his message was that God still loved the nation He had condemned and longed for their repentance. His appeal, like the severer judgment of Amos, fell on deaf ears ; neither love nor justice would touch the heart of Israel.

### **The Fall of Israel.**

The prophecy of Amos was fulfilled, and Israel fell. The fulfilment was not the arbitrary act of God—it never is—it was historical and moral necessity. What would have happened had Israel proved a people after God's own heart we cannot say. As it was, the approach of Assyria finds Israel forming an alliance with Syria and Phœnicia against her, and trying to force Ahaz, King of Judah, to join them. Following the counsel of the Judæan prophet, Isaiah, to scorn these two "tails of

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smoking firebrands," he refuses the alliance. The allies are defeated, and a period of subjection with the payment of tribute follows. Ineffectual revolt leads at last to the siege of Samaria, the capital, and its capture and destruction by Sargon in 722 B.C. (See Diagrams 5 and 6, Part IV.)

### **The Samaritans.**

The majority of the inhabitants were dispersed in captivity—they were not numerous. A large number, however, remained in a subject condition in Palestine, where they intermarried with Mesopotamian settlers introduced by Assyria, and were known as the Samaritans. Their religion and customs became a queer blend of paganism and Jehovah worship. It was, however, the type of Jehovah worship which Elijah had condemned—a carrying on of the externals with loss of real spirit. Their policy was eclectic rather than exclusive, and hence they were never acknowledged as true worshippers by the Jews. Augmented by those who were expelled from Jerusalem by Ezra and Nehemiah, they persisted to the days of Jesus, and still exist—a tiny community of one hundred and seventy souls—in Shechem, and carry out their ancient Israelitish rites. But they have produced no nation, no literature, no great characters; they have made no contribution to religion or social advance; they have, in fact, made no kind of progress either in thought or practice; they have stagnated in superstition. This was the fate which Elijah might have foretold as the inevitable consequence of trying to fear the Lord and serve their own gods. (See Diagram 4 (b), Part IV.)

*Elijah*, the prophet of exclusive and intolerant Jehovah worship.

*Amos*, the prophet of Divine Judgment on the chosen people.

*Hosea*, the prophet of God's loving call to repentance even while he condemns.

These are the three great prophets of Northern Israel. Their message, freed from the crudities and limitations of these ancient days is a permanent one, as true for London in A.D. 1922 as for Samaria in B.C. 722, and as deeply needed.

The Book of *Amos* is so little known that a few extracts may be interesting.

*His Exposure of Social Injustice and Oppression.*

- i. 6. They sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes.
- ii. 7. They trample to the dust of the earth the head of the poor.
- ii. 8. The very cloths which they spread to lie upon beside all the altars are garments taken in pledge, and they drink the wine of those who have been fined (unjustly).
- v. 7. You turn the law into wormwood and put an end to all the country's rights.
- v. 11. You trample down the poor and squeeze load after load of corn from them.
- v. 12. You take bribes to persecute people who have done no harm and you wrong the poor in the courts.
- iv. 1. Listen to this you women of Samaria—you great Bashan cows! You grind down and oppress the poor lower classes. You induce your husbands to get money to buy drink.

*The Vision of God's Judgment.*

- vii. 8. I am putting a plumbline against the heart of Israel my people, for I cannot go on overlooking things.

*God's Disgust with Shallow Worship.*

- v. 21. I hate and loath your religious festivals. Your special services do not touch me. When you burn offerings to me I do not enjoy your gifts, and I take no notice at all of your richest sacrifices. Do stop worrying me with your noisy hymns; I cannot bear the music of your harps.
- v. 24. But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.

*Their Privileges Only Make Their Fall More Wicked.*

- iii. 2. Just because you are the only nation in the world with whom I have come into close relations, I will punish you for all your crimes.
- iv. 11. Ye were as a brand plucked from the burning. Yet have ye not returned unto me.

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### *The Prophet Sees the Approaching Doom.*

- iv. 12. Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.
- iii. 8. Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.
- v. 18. You people who want the Golden Age so badly, what good will it do you? I will tell you, it means darkness, not light. Suppose a man trying to escape from a lion, finds a bear in front of him, bolts into a hut and is bitten by a snake. That is the Great Day that is coming for you.

### *The Judgment.*

- vi. 1, 6, 7. The complacent and thoughtless people of Israel and Samaria are too horrible for words. For the wreck and ruin of their fellow countrymen they have not the smallest sympathy. For all this they will be the first to be taken captive and exiled.
- iv. 2. You women of Israel. The time is coming when men shall drive flesh hooks and barbs into you and drag you through the holes that have been broken in the city walls, and fling your bodies on to dung heaps.
- viii. 3. The songs of the sanctuary shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God, there shall be many dead bodies in every place.
- ix. 2. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to the skies, thence will I bring them down.
- ix. 4. I will set mine eyes upon them for evil and not for good.
- ix. 8. Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth.

### **Israel's Doom.**

Thus one half of the Jewish nation disappears from history. The foolish speculations as to the fate of these tribes should not trouble us. They lacked altogether the discipline and cohesion of their Judæan brethren; their religion was more crude and primitive, and they took with them no outstanding religious leaders. The religious and social decay, which had gone as far as Amos describes, meant the complete disintegration of the nation after their defeat at the hands of Sargon; they were simply absorbed into the welter of nationalities.

Israel's greatest lack was in responsible and truly patriotic leaders; she had trusted too long to jingo

patriots and self-seekers, her mental and moral vigour had been sapped by her degenerate courses, and in the end there was not only no leadership and no political guidance, but no sense of God's will and God's way for them in their hour of trouble. The prophecy of Amos was fulfilled :—

viii. 11, 12. Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea and from north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

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NOTE: The writer is much indebted to Prof. Robinson's version for the above translations. See p. 160.



## CHAPTER XIII

*(For this Chapter consult Diagrams 5 and 6, Part IV.)*

### THE HISTORY OF JUDAH TO JOSIAH'S REFORMATION

#### **Differences Between Israel and Judah.**

The brief history of Northern Israel drew to its close one hundred and thirty-six years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and even after that terrible event Judah showed a spirit of cohesion in the midst of disruptive forces and a recuperative power in captivity that seems to have been absent in the northern tribes.

There was always a marked difference in character, perhaps due to the greater accessibility of the low-lying hills of Israel, sloping gently down to the great highway and fertile plain of Esdraelon. Foreign nations could easier penetrate, impress and corrupt, and later conquer, Israel than the rugged highlands of Judah, which remained far more impenetrable and aloof, and developed a keener national sense and a more vigorous and resistant type of character.

Subsequently Judæan religion became corrupted by a blatant paganism which included the worship of Astarte, the sun, moon and stars ; but even then there was a strong and faithful remnant to which the prophets could appeal.

The south was more fanatical and far less easily influenced than the north.

The sheer difficulty of pressing a campaign into the fastnesses of the barren Judæan hills postponed their final conquest, and gave opportunity for those who had

religion at heart to learn the lessons of Amos and Hosea and the more terrible lesson still of Israel's destruction. The result was a vigorous group of religious reformers, led by a succession of powerful prophets, who, in spite of the faithlessness of the majority, made such a solid body of converts that when the great disaster came they carried their national faith into exile, conserved their individuality throughout that trial, and returned to rebuild their nation. (See Diagram 4 (a), Part IV.)

### **The Kings of Judah.**

To plunge into the dreary chronicles of unimportant kings would be a mistake ; all we need note is an invasion of Judah in 932 B.C. by Shishak of Egypt, who captured Jerusalem and took away the golden shields, afterwards replaced by bronze ones.

The daughter of Jezebel married a king of Judah, and after his death reigned as Queen Mother for many years, establishing Baal worship in Jerusalem. She was eventually deposed and slain, Baal worship was suppressed, and the ruined Temple repaired.

The first king we note is Uzziah, that powerful and successful contemporary of Jeroboam II, whose frontiers extended as far as the port of Elath on the Red Sea. Idolatry seems to have increased to a considerable extent, images and sacred symbols of many pagan cults abounded, social corruption of the same kind as that which accompanied the prosperity of Israel was rife in these days of success. The king became a leper before his death, but even then he seems to have been a source of confidence in these difficult days of the approach of Assyria. (See Diagrams 5 and 6, Part IV.) His death produced something of a panic. The one strong man in a corrupt age was gone and danger threatened.

The crisis was probably the occasion of the dedication of the young Isaiah to his task, for it was in this year that he saw his great vision.

The reign of Ahaz marked still further corruption,

especially in religion, and the depression and terror of those dark days were reflected in the cruel rites of child sacrifice in propitiation of the gods, to which Ahaz and his people resorted in their despair. Undoubtedly, however, the Syrian altar which supplanted the ancient altar of the Temple, together with many other innovations, seemed to the men of Judah a sign of progress and broad-minded culture. The worship of Jehovah was conducted with somewhat ancient, if not antiquated, rites and with old-fashioned altars and apparatus; even the Temple was rather old and the worse for wear. The modern cults and their paraphernalia were up to date, artistic, and had all the impressiveness of that which comes from a powerful and highly-civilised nation to a more backward one.

In spite of this degeneration the prophetic group was very much alive. Both Micah and Isaiah belong to this period. The influence of Isaiah in particular seems to have made an impression on King Hezekiah and the national policy, and to have led to certain religious reforms.

### **Isaiah.**

Isaiah's first appearance in international politics was in the reign of Ahaz, when the despairing Syrians and their allies of North Israel tried to force the kingdom of Judah into an alliance against the common foe Assyria. Isaiah, in the strongest possible language and with great eloquence, scoffs at the feebleness and certain annihilation of the coalition, and urges complete neutrality. Ahaz refused the alliance, but was foolish enough to ask Assyria for assistance. Had he done nothing, Assyria, who was already approaching, would have quickly engaged the full attentions of his enemies, and would hardly have troubled about the little province of Judah. As it was, she was enabled to secure a grip on Judah which she never relaxed. From this time tribute flows from Jerusalem to Nineveh, and afterwards to Babylon, until the final catastrophe.

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Isaiah developed a philosophy of history and a political policy which mark him out as a statesman as well as a man of God. He was undoubtedly a well-born and well-educated man, with access to court circles and a reputation in Jerusalem. However much people objected to him, he was always listened to. He was also a poet; there is a balance and ring about his utterances, a constructive skill in composing an oracle, and a beauty of imagery and style that lift him into the front rank of the world's greatest writers. Above all, he was a true prophet. His visions, his premonitions, his serene confidence in the absolute supremacy of God's will in every event, his dramatic methods of bringing home his messages by placard, by giving his sons astonishing names,<sup>1</sup> and by wandering about barefoot and half naked for three years as a symbol of the captivity, all witness to that remarkable type of religious leader which the Hebrew nation alone has produced.

### **Isaiah as Statesman.**

Isaiah was a politician, like all the greatest prophets of Israel, who would be considerably astonished to find modern worshippers of Jehovah declaring that religion had nothing to do with politics. He was fully conversant with all the facts of the international situation, but, unlike the court politicians, he did not weigh them in the balances with sole regard to the strength of armies and strategic considerations, and with total disregard of the danger of alliance with unprincipled powers. With Isaiah the supreme factor was the God of Righteousness, before Whom even the power of Assyria was but an instrument, to be destroyed in relentless judgment for its wickedness when its predestined task is accomplished.

Unless precisely the same principles are as true to-day as then, the Book of Isaiah is of no use to us. But surely

<sup>1</sup> Such as Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, "Swift is the spoil, speedy the prey."

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its conception of prophetic statesmanship was never so desperately needed as to-day.

### **Bowing to the Storm.**

Isaiah's chief conclusion was that the day of small nations was over, and that Assyria and her successor, Babylon, were going to overrun the world. There was only one policy, and that was complete submission, quietness and confidence. Lie low and say nothing. Leave the rest to God. In the turmoils and wars which were coming force and greed and unrighteousness would be destroyed by still greater force and greed and unrighteousness. Isaiah did not invite Judah to enter that competition, but rather to rely on passivity, righteousness and freedom from ambition, sure that God would preserve His own people, and when the great *débâcle* came she would survive to be carried on to her great destiny by her mighty preserver.

### **Secret Treaties.**

When Hezekiah was foolish enough to welcome an embassy from Merodach Baladan of Babylon, who was conspiring against Assyria, and to show him all the treasures of Jerusalem, Isaiah bitingly remarked that to show a thief your riches may win a temporary alliance, but certainly means that he will eventually get them for himself. They were taken to Babylon a hundred years later. Isaiah was even more concerned at the foreign policy this incident stood for. It meant that Judah had plunged into the whirlpool of intrigue and conspiracy, alliance and secret treaty, which was linking Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Moab and Edom into futile confederacy against Assyria. Isaiah poured forth his denunciations and pleaded hard for his policy of complete isolation; he was told that his advice was supremely childish, the prattle of an infant who cannot understand high politics, and they went their way.



### **Assyria Attacks.**

Assyria struck her first blow in the days of Sargon (who had captured Samaria). This was in 711 B.C., and resulted in the capture of the Philistine centre of Ashdod. But the revolt was finally crushed in 701 B.C. under Sennacherib, who occupied Philistia, captured forty-six Judæan cities, including the stronghold of Lachish, which he made his headquarters, and blockaded Jerusalem. Hezekiah was reduced to buying off his enemies with tribute, though when summoned by Sennacherib's generals to surrender the city he refused on the earnest advice of Isaiah, whose counsel had been frantically sought in the hour of disaster. It proved a wise step. For reasons unknown, Sennacherib never pressed the siege. Perhaps he never meant to, knowing what a difficult task it would prove; perhaps the threats of his generals were but bluff; perhaps his forces were threatened from another quarter. One tradition speaks of disease among his troops, another of trouble at home. At any rate, the hosts drew off and Jerusalem was saved.

### **An Attempt at Reformation.**

The prestige of Isaiah was greatly raised by this deliverance, and for a time his influence in the capital was supreme. Undoubtedly this was the moment at which he prevailed upon Hezekiah to carry out the rather insignificant reformation of that time. This consisted in the destruction of all the obvious pagan images and symbols, but not of the high places, and presumably an expulsion of the cults, including unworthy images of Jehovah such as the old brazen serpent, which had long been in the Temple. Isaiah, with his lofty conception of God, could not for a moment tolerate a symbol of that sort. This reformation depended wholly on the momentary supremacy of Isaiah. It was not a popular movement, and was probably deeply resented. Subsequent disasters were attributed to the foolish policy of destroying



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these sacred objects, and, as Isaiah's influence rapidly waned, there was a terrible reaction. This reaction culminated in the awful paganism and idolatry of Manasseh's reign, in which a frantic and terror-stricken people plunge into vile superstitions and propitiatory rites to secure salvation from their approaching doom at the hands of their enemies.

In spite of the Baal worship of Elijah's time, such blatant paganism had not been a characteristic of Northern Israel. Isaiah and his successors, however, direct their main attacks towards the superstitious and idolatrous practices of imported heathen cults.

His teachings bore fruit in after years, but in the days of Manasseh the only result was the persecution and slaughter of his followers. The one lesson his contemporaries learnt of him was a wrong one; they never forgot his words at the deliverance of Jerusalem, and they quickly developed a fanatical and superstitious belief in the inviolability of the Holy City. However degenerate their faith, so full of sanctity was Zion that no invader could ever pass its gates or tread its streets. It was to be Jeremiah's mournful task to dispel this illusion in later years.

### **Isaiah's Policy and Message.**

#### *Early Policy in the Days of Ahaz.*

- vii. 4. Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and of the Son of Remaliah (Pekah).

Alliance with North Israel (Pekah) and Syria (Rezin) against Assyria is condemned; before nine months have elapsed God will have destroyed them.

#### *Alliance Condemned in Later Years.*

- xxxix. 1. Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord.

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### *The Policy of Isolation.*

- xxx. 15. In returning and rest shall ye be saved ; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.
- xxvi. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.
- xxvi. 20. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation is overpast.

### *His Condemnation of False Worship.*

- i. 11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices . . . bring no more vain oblations, etc.

### *Judgment.*

- v. 24-30. As the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so shall their root be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust.
- xxviii. 17. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.
- i. 25. I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross.
- iv. 4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

### *The Convinced Minority to Learn the Lesson.*

- viii. 16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

### *The Coming Leader.*

- ix. 2. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light.
- ix. 6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, etc.
- xi. 2. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.
- xi. 4. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth.
- xi. 9. The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

### *The Inviolability of Jerusalem.*

- xxx. 5. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem ; defending also he will deliver it ; and passing over he will preserve it.

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### *Social Evils.*

There are many passages attacking various social evils in the same vein as Amos :—

1. False leaders (iii. 12).
2. Grinding the faces of the poor (iii. 15).
3. Extravagance of women's dress (iii. 16-26).
4. Enclosure of large estates (v. 8).
5. Drunkenness (v. 11, 22).
6. Bribery (v. 23).

### **Isaiah as Prophet.**

The writings of Isaiah are handed down to us in the first half of the book of that name, the second half being of much later date and by other hands. It is doubtful whether all the words attributed to Isaiah even in the first half (chs. i-xxxix) are his genuine utterances ; quite probably they express the reflections and achievements of a later age. Does it matter ? They fit in admirably with the spirit and teaching of Isaiah himself, and their lesson to all ages is still true.

Isaiah transcends the earlier prophets in several ways. In the first place he lifts religion on to a new plane, an achievement not only for himself and a handful of disciples, but for the world and for all time. God is above and beyond all symbolic images, He is too great to be chained to the material. His vision in chapter vi is the expression of a new and loftier conception of God, which, once it had been fully expressed and understood, could never be forgotten. The God of Isaiah is far nearer the God we worship to-day than is the God of Amos. In the days of man's primitive conceptions the sacred or divine is inevitably attached to material objects—sacred springs, pillars, trees, stones, and the like—and this was true of Hebrew religion. There comes a time, however, when the conception of a God "high and lifted up" becomes possible. After that the material object becomes an idol or a fetish, and continued reverence for it denotes a wilful and degrading superstition. Isaiah marks this turning point in Hebrew religious history.

### **Isaiah and National Destiny.**

The political policy of Isaiah we have already considered in its historical setting. It was a pacifist policy, a policy of isolation. Isaiah saw a nobler destiny of Judah than for her to be swept into the maelstrom and international rivalries and wars. "Remote, obscure and deficient in natural wealth of every sort, she was ideally situated for the part she had to play, as a nursery of free men, developing their own religious and civil institutions without interference from the contentious world powers that trod the plains and, later, sailed the seas. In so far as she abstained from alliances with one foreign power against another—and this was always the policy of the prophets from the days of Isaiah in the time of Sennacherib onwards—she fulfilled this duty to herself and, in ultimate effect, her mission to the world. But princes and people again and again turned a deaf ear to the warning of prophet-statesmen. So Jerusalem also came under the yoke of the heathen, and sometimes under the harrow too." <sup>1</sup>

### **The Possibility of National Disaster.**

Isaiah also saw this judgment more as a purging fire than as a final catastrophe. He calls upon his disciples to keep alive his message through the days of terror; he foresees a remnant who shall learn the lesson and carry it over to the time of fresh opportunity for reconstruction. This was a revolutionary doctrine, for hitherto it had been all but impossible for a Hebrew to contemplate the nation other than as a whole—as such it must either stand or fall. The Book of Isaiah first teaches that the nation as a nation may be destroyed, but a group within it may survive and accomplish Israel's destiny. This is the first notion of the "Church in the world." Quite likely Isaiah himself did not clearly teach this doctrine, later writers may have attributed more to him

<sup>1</sup> *How to Read the Bible*, Bryant, p. 133.

than he actually grasped, but it was clearly held by the time the book was in circulation.

### **The Deliverer.**

With this doctrine the ideal of the divinely-appointed Leader and Deliverer must be associated. The idea that even prophecy is insufficient, that personality and concrete leadership is necessary, is prominent in both sections of the Book of Isaiah. No one in these days would speak of an actual prevision of the coming of Jesus. What we have is a clear enough conviction that without someone, someone special, an inspired leader, who would be something more than a thinker, nothing would be accomplished ; and beyond that a conviction that, since this is necessary, God will raise him up in due time.

### **Holiness and Taboo.** (See Diagrams 7 and 8. Part IV.)

Isaiah also carries further the prophetic development of the idea of holiness. The Books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are full of the idea of holiness as mere unethical taboo, relics of primitive Semitic religion ; the prophets are continually insisting that holiness is not magical sacredness, but an ethical quality. The peculiar sacredness of the deity is not abstract divinity, but *righteousness*, and hence everything holy, because of association with Him, must partake of His righteousness. This refers to the whole people of Israel as well as to individuals. That the prophet had no easy task will be realised when we remember that religion to-day is still saturated with the notion that holiness of objects, days, rites, symbols, officials, buildings and religious actions of all sorts has a value apart from righteousness, even if it is desirable that righteousness should accompany it.

The prophetic teaching was never fully accepted, but the energetic and eloquent advocacy of Isaiah established the principle more firmly than ever before among the truly religious Israelites of his day.



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It is just because of this practical and ethical conception of holiness that Isaiah, the most polished and literary of the prophets, is not content with generalities, however poetical and fervent, but comes down to a detailed criticism of the social injustices and vices of his day in a pointed manner which no doubt gave great offence to many who might have welcomed religious reform that confined itself to theology.

Of the literary qualities of Isaiah and of his poetical style we do not intend to write, simply because his sincere and moving rhetoric speaks for itself. It is only possible for us to deal with his prophecies from a religious and social point of view.

### **The Last Phase. The Puritan Reformation Begun.**

There was one last attempt at genuine reformation before the final collapse of Judah. After the dark days of reaction under Manasseh, the reign of Josiah brings forth the fruit of the repressed prophetic message. No doubt when open witness and preaching were impossible the "remnant" fell back upon writing and private persuasion of an intensive kind. One of the most important books of this period was the lofty code of religion and morals known as *Deuteronomy*, to which we have already referred. Is it necessary to point out again that the supposed setting of the book as before the Israelites cross Jordan is of course only a literary fiction?

I. It is the product of a very decided school of late religious reflection, which finds good reason in five centuries of superstition for a radical break with the religious customs of the past, however hallowed by tradition, and even if they are expressly sanctioned in earlier sacred writings like *Exodus* and *Judges*.

II. Their code of regulations dealing with the kingship and the administration of justice was based upon a severe experience of tyranny and corruption under a long succession of unrighteous rulers.



III. Their social laws were devised as an alternative to the social chaos of a corrupt age and in contradiction to the anti-social conditions then prevailing.

IV. Bitter experience of false prophets leads them to make a clear statement as to the tests of genuineness and the authority of the true prophet.

V. The main religious change advocated was the complete suppression of all the places of worship except the Temple. "This was an innovation which dislocated the whole system of religious observances, and legislation had to provide for the direct and indirect consequences of so radical a change."

- (a) Hence animals may be slaughtered at home, and not only before the altar as heretofore.
- (b) Charity tithes for the poor replace the hospitality of the village altar.
- (c) Similar arrangements are made for the support of the Levites or official sacrificing clan.

The purity and grandeur of the prophets' ideals and their lofty teaching on holiness pervades every part of the book, and there is also a winning note, a tenderness, springing from some gentle spirit who yearned for a national conversion to the simplicity and beauty of the gospel put forth by these disciples of the prophets.

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(It is not, unfortunately, possible to increase the size of this book by printing as complete a series of quotations from *Deuteronomy* and the other prophetic books with which we shall deal subsequently as we did for *Amos*. But we urge the reader to do so for himself, and we can give him all the material for such a summary. Even if the passages are simply looked up and clearly marked (in ink), it will be very much easier to understand the general principles laid down in this book. Concrete detail and the actual words of the Bible are indeed essential to any real understanding of the prophetic teaching.)

## Summary of Deuteronomy.

### I. The People of Destiny, iv. 1-9.

II. Judges and Kings. The Judges to deal justly, the King to be humble, xvi. 18-20; xvii. 14-20. Witnesses in legal cases, xix. 15-19. Cities of Refuge, xix. 21.

### III. Wise and Humane Laws for General Good.

- (a) Land, xix. 14. Gleaning; generosity to the poor and to beasts, xxiv, xxv, xv. 7.
- (b) Debts and slaves released every seven years, xv. 1, 2, 12, 18.
- (c) Usury forbidden, xxiii. 19.
- (d) Restrictions on taking pledges from the poor, xxiv. 10-15.
- (e) Just weights, xxv. 13-16.
- (f) Abrogation of law condemning whole families for the sin of one, xxiv. 16.
- (g) Love for foreigners, x. 19.

### IV. Religious Regulations.

- (a) Worship at local shrines to cease. Concentration at Jerusalem, xii. 1-8. (Compare Exod. xx. 24.)
- (b) Slaughter of beasts for food, xii. 15.
- (c) Tithes. For poor and Levites, xiv. 22-29. Sacred poles (Asherah, groves in A.V.) and images condemned, xvi. 21.
- (d) All connection with local deities condemned, vi. 14; xii. 30, 31. Stern punishments for disobedience, xiii, xvii, xxx. 15-20.
- (e) Prophets advocating pagan worship to be killed, xiii. 1-9.
- (f) Divining and wizardry condemned and true prophets described, xviii. 10-22.
- (g) Sacredness of the people, xiv. 1-2.
- (h) Reasonableness and simplicity of the law and duty of learning it, xxx. 11; x. 18.
- (i) Final appeals to love and loyalty, x. 12-18; xiii. 13, 14; vi.

## How Deep was this Reformation ?

This prophetic book was brought forward in the reign of Josiah; the king lent his support, and the reformation described in 2 Kings xxii. took place. The obvious and external characteristic of this movement was the suppression of all the shrines except Jerusalem and the abolition of the local Levitical priesthood. Was this ever done on a thorough scale? Was *Deuteronomy* ever accepted whole-heartedly by the nation? Some have

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even questioned whether the book itself was produced in its entirety at this time, and surmise that nothing more than the main law of suppression was advanced, and even that was only enforced half-heartedly. At any rate, there is no evidence of any real change for the better in the private and social lives of the people ; the reformation, in so far as it took place, was an external one only. Jeremiah, who was alive at the time, took no part in it as far as we can tell, and afterwards bitterly denounced the people for the shallowness of their conversion. The truth seems to be that, however desirable the reformation must have seemed to earnest minds, it was never really effected. It may have been begun. Jeremiah found things as bad as they had ever been, and therefore we may say that it was Jeremiah who first openly advocated the whole gospel of *Deuteronomy* and endeavoured to bring the nation to that genuine and revolutionary revival which alone could have saved it from its impending doom.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAH

THE fall of Judah is the tragedy of a thwarted destiny. Particularly to religious minds with a deep genuine trust in God's Providence the complete collapse of the nation, the destruction of the sacred dwelling-place of Jehovah, and the exile of His chosen people, was a soul-shattering cataclysm difficult for them to understand. The Hebrews were entirely convinced of the direct control of their life by God; every event, from a fall of rain or a domestic accident to a lost battle or a plague, was a divine interposition. Their history was in their eyes not so much the record of what their great men had done or what the Hebrews had accomplished, as the record of what God had done for them. The last great "deliverance" from Sennacherib only heightened that faith, even in those whose loyalty to Jehovah was little more than a cheerful confidence that He would support them, right or wrong, righteous or unrighteous, so long as they acknowledged His supremacy in Temple ritual.

Hence the passionate eloquence of Jeremiah is bitterly resented, for without hesitation he proclaims inevitable disaster; he emphatically declares that there can be no repentance, they are too far gone for that, irrevocable destruction is upon them. The fate of Jerusalem raises one tremendous question which Jeremiah only begins to answer. Are God's purposes completely and finally thwarted, or is there any possibility of a restoration? Jeremiah sees that if there is any hope it must mean a fresh start for national religion, for personal piety, with

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new ideas of God and worship, and above all a new conception of personal relations between individual Hebrews and their God. Jeremiah was feeling towards this discovery, but the task of restoration belongs to Ezekiel, and above all to the author of the second half of *Isaiah*. Jeremiah's own task was to lay bare the incurable sin of his people, and declare their national collapse to be not the defeat of God, but God's rejection of His people.

### **Outline of History.**

But let us first turn to the march of history that we may clearly see the framework of Jeremiah's message.

The reforming monarch, Josiah, was killed by the Egyptians in battle in 608 B.C. Superstitious folk instantly concluded that the gods had deserted the man who had suppressed their shrines. Hence no very earnest efforts were made to carry on the reformation; the old practices sprang up, more obscene and immoral than ever. The all-powerful Egyptians now controlled Judah, deposing the new king and appointing another, Jehoiakim, in his place, and binding the country in an alliance against Assyria. Jehoiakim, the puppet of Egypt, proved a luxury-loving despot, who in the midst of his peoples' suffering built an elaborate palace "by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong," using "his neighbours' service without wages," employing instead the forced labour of the peasantry.

### **Babylon.**

Meanwhile the great Assyrian empire was near the end. In 607 B.C. Nineveh was captured by the Babylonians, who had been the dominant power in Mesopotamia for centuries, but had been eclipsed by Assyria since 900 B.C. The Babylonian supremacy was finally achieved by the victory of Carchemish in 605 B.C., in which Egypt was finally crushed. This meant that the vassal state of Judah fell into the hands of Babylon. Jehoiakim remained in subjection for three years, and then rebelled

at the instigation of Egypt. Invading bands of hostile warriors harassed the kingdom, but Babylon made as yet no definite attempt to crush Jehoiakim. (See Diagrams 5 and 6, Part IV.)

### **Jeremiah.**

Jeremiah, who probably preached a series of early sermons in Josiah's reign (possibly before the reformation), comes to the fore in this interval. We read of his persecution in his native village of Anathoth, where as a member of a priestly family he had important connections. We next hear of a stern sermon delivered at the very doors of the Temple, followed by his imprisonment and subsequent release, procured by the more sympathetic among the nobility. Further sermons, often illustrated in a dramatic fashion, also rouse violent opposition, and Jeremiah finds himself in the stocks. Failing to make any impression by the spoken word, he commits his message to writing. The few earnest men in the court secure the reading of this book to the king ; but Jehoiakim contemptuously destroys it. He is subsequently killed in some affray with the raiders. His successor has only reigned three months when the Babylonian hosts approach Jerusalem and, after a short siege, conquer it, carrying the cream of the population into exile, and leaving only riff-raff behind under the puppet king Zedekiah.

### **The Destruction of Jerusalem.**

Jeremiah remains behind with these poor folk, "over-ripe figs" as he calls them, and earnestly counsels complete submission. For nine years all is peaceful. Meanwhile he writes to the captives in Babylon, "the good, freshly-gathered figs," recommending a peaceful and constructive policy and an earnest seeking of God ; there is hope for them, none for those left in Jerusalem. At last, in alliance with Egypt, the foolish Zedekiah rebels, and Nebuchadnezzar besieges the city. During the siege the Jews, to secure the help of God, promise to release



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their slaves, but when the approach of their Egyptian allies for a moment draws off their enemies the promise is immediately broken, much to Jeremiah's disgust. The siege is soon renewed on the defeat of the Egyptians, and again Jeremiah counsels surrender. His anti-war policy leads to his imprisonment in a disused well, from which he is rescued by a friendly Ethiopian. The resistance of the Jews is useless, the city falls, and, with the Temple, is destroyed. The surviving Jews linger on with the unfortunate prophet in their midst, and the most part eventually drift into Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. There is no more to tell.

### **Jeremiah the Man.**

Jeremiah is one of the most interesting and tragic figures in the Bible, and his message marks the culminating point of Old Testament prophecy. Of no other of the prophets do we know so much. His prophecies, edited by his disciple, Baruch the Scribe (and also by later hands), contain much detailed biographical material, and we have in his own words a revelation of his personal feelings and spiritual struggles, as well as stern denunciations of his nation.

His story reveals the heart of a sensitive man and a passionate lover of his country. The fierce opposition which would have left a harder nature unmoved racks his soul; the duty of prophesying an awful doom is an unwelcome task. He even turns in anguish and reproaches God with the cruelty of committing this impossible mission to him, only to fall back with renewed faith on the conviction that God is behind His messenger and will make him a tower of brass against his adversaries. From earliest youth he seems to have recognised himself as the prophet of despair who would never be listened to, and he is indeed the preacher of a gloomy pessimism unknown to the other prophets. But this pessimism is by no means merely the reflection of a gloomy temperament; it is the faithful reflection of actual facts, while the cheer-

fully optimistic prophets whom he denounces are blind to reality.

In the face of the inner corruption of the nation's heart there is no possibility of repentance, in the face of God's righteousness there is no possibility of escape; the foolish trust in the inviolability of God's sacred city and the security of His chosen people must be swept ruthlessly aside.

In particular he opposes every activity of the State which is directed to its self-preservation; he is a nihilist. Some pessimists rather enjoy their gloom. Jeremiah is not of this type; he is broken-hearted over the doom of his people, every prophecy is wrung from him in agony.

#### SOME CHARACTERISTIC TEACHINGS OF JEREMIAH.

##### **I. The Need for a True Reformation.**

It requires more courage to criticise reformers than to criticise abuses. Jeremiah was quick to realise that the ideals of *Deuteronomy* had not really been accepted by priests, prophets and people. Josiah's reformation was a sham. There had not been that radical change of heart without which reform of sacrifice and externals and the formulation of moral codes is useless. This is not so obvious a point as it seems, for undoubtedly a large number of quite sincere prophets and national leaders were convinced that real progress had been made. They doubtless reproached Jeremiah for expecting too much, for being in a hurry, and for despising genuine efforts after better things. The Jeremiahs of to-day are those who criticise the League of Nations because the participating peoples and Governments have not really abandoned the commercial rivalries, the diplomatic intrigues for strategic frontiers, the national pride, which are the real causes of war. Even fervent peace agitation is open to criticism if it is not based upon a deep conviction that all war under any circumstances is wrong. Social reformers may be asked how they can expect the

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millennium without a radical change in our whole social system, and whether they are making too much of slight ameliorative measures of reform.

### II. The Corruption of the Nation's Heart.

Jeremiah had a keen sense of sin which revealed to him that perversion of spirit which he regarded as so serious. It was not only offences, but the heart from which they proceeded, at which Jeremiah looked; and when he looked he saw incurable moral disease, an ingrained habit of evil, right instincts dead and wrong instincts in their place. There might be a chance of saving a few individuals, but not of reforming the nation—it was too late.

### III. Personal Reform.

It was to the reclamation of individuals that Jeremiah looked. This was a new and difficult thought for the Hebrews, who had previously thought and acted corporately. Hitherto it was national sin and national punishment they had troubled about. The nation must be saved *en masse* or not at all. Jeremiah discerns a new method: the nation is to be broken to pieces, its unity destroyed, its destiny as a people abandoned. From the broken fragments the precious must be sorted from the vile, and the few thus selected will reconstruct the new people of God. The basis of the new nation, however, will not be a corporate covenant, but an individual covenant, a personal realisation of sin and of the law of Jehovah. The new men of God will be righteous because the hidden springs of the soul have been purified. Finally, the new righteousness, being of this individual character, cannot be taught or enforced as a code from without; it must be instinctive, one's very own possession, one's own deepest self. This profound mystical teaching goes farther than any other Old Testament prophecy, and is the first rough outline of the message of Jesus Himself.

#### IV. Jeremiah as Deliverer.

In another way Jeremiah is a forecast of Jesus—in his own personality as a redeemer of Israel. His suffering with and for his people in their sin and punishment, his intense love for them, his poignant shame and sorrow for their hardness of heart, are an essential part of his message. We have not understood Jeremiah if we have only understood his words with our minds. *We must feel with him*, and the story of his life and his own self-revelations help us to do this. It was his *personality* which more than he knew made his message ring true, made it convincing, made people see what he meant. “You must feel as I feel about these things,” was the unspoken appeal of the great prophet. The only men who would be saved would be those who were like Jeremiah, like him inwardly.

#### The Book of Jeremiah.

The Book of *Jeremiah* presents the teachings of the prophet in rather chaotic form: we have a mixture of biography, historical extracts from *Kings*, sermons and stray sayings put together from earlier collections and containing a good many textual errors, and a few interpolations. Many sections are misplaced and the sequence of the chapters does not follow the chronological order of events. It would be of the greatest value if we could have an ordered, modern edition of *Jeremiah*.<sup>\*</sup> Failing this, the following extracts have been selected as giving the essence of the prophecies, and readers are urged to mark and read carefully the additional references in each section.

#### Jeremiah's Personality.

##### *His Call.*

- i. 10. I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.  
(See also the rest of ch. i.)

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<sup>\*</sup> This has now been published. *Jeremiah*, by the Rev. Professor Adam Welch, D.D. Adult School Union. 1s. 3d. net.

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### *His Unhappiness and Lack of Family Solace.*

- iv. 19. I am pained at my very heart; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. (See also xvi. 1-4.)
- ix. 1. Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. (Also iv. 20-22; viii. 14-22; xiii. 17; xiv. 17.)

### *Persecution.*

- In the stocks, xx. 1-2. (Also xi. 18-20; xxvi; xviii. 18-21; xxxvii.)

### *Resentment against God for Making Him a Prophet.*

- xv. 10. Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!
- xx. 9. His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones.
- v. 14. Cursed be the day wherein I was born. (Also xv. 18-21; xx. 7-10, 14-18.)

### *His Divine Resources.*

- vi. 11. I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in.
- xv. 20. I will make [thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall.

### *His Moral Teaching.*

#### *I.—The Sham Reformation.*

- iii. 10. Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly.
- ix. 26. Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.
- viii. 11. They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. (Also iv. 4, 14; v. 24; vii. 5, 7; viii. 8.)

#### *II.—Moral Condemnation.*

##### *Lack of Truth.*

- v. 1. Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places, thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.
- ix. 5. They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth.

##### *Oppression and Violence.*

- vii. 6. If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, etc.
- v. 26. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. (Also v. 27-28; ix. 3-6.)



*Hardness and Perversion of Heart.*

- v. 3. They have made their faces harder than a rock.  
xiii. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.  
xvii. 1. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, it is graven upon the table of their heart.

*Complete Pessimism.*

- xxx. 12. Thy bruise is incurable.  
vii. 16. Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee. (Also vii. 27-29; xv. 1.)

*Judgment and Destruction.*

- xv. 6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary of repenting.  
xxv. 29. Lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name.  
xxv. 15. Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. (Also many other passages: xxv. 8-11; xxiii. 16-18, 30-32; ix. 1-11, 21-23; ix. 9-22.)

*The Temple Sermon.*

- vii. 4. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. (Also chs. vii and xxvi.)

*Denunciations of False Prophets.*

- xiv. 14. The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. (Also ch. xxiii. 9-15.)

*Visions and Symbolic Preaching, i. 11, 12, 13-16; xiii; xix, etc.*

*Opposition to Military Resistance, xxi. 9, 10; xxxvii; xxxviii.*

*The Only Hope.*

- xviii. 4. The vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.  
xxix. 13. Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.  
iv. 3, 4. Break up your fallow ground, sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart.

*The New Covenant.*

- xxxi. 33. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people.  
(The whole of ch. xxxi is of the greatest importance.)



## CHAPTER XV

### THE RESTORATION

#### I. Ezekiel.

While Jeremiah is in mingled sorrow and anger warning the Hebrews who are left in Jerusalem to submit to Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel is proclaiming the same message to the exiles in Babylon itself. The exiles would be continually hoping for some rising against their conquerors which would return them to Jerusalem in triumph. Ezekiel takes up the same pessimistic attitude as Jeremiah, and denounces the religious leaders who are deluding the people with these vain hopes. For a time he is regarded as unpatriotic and not worth listening to; but when a survivor from the stricken city reaches Babylon and brings the terrible news of the complete destruction of Jerusalem, it is to the neglected prophet that they turn in their despair, and Ezekiel from that moment is the religious leader of exiled Judah.

It was a critical time. There is nothing more dangerous than despair. The tearing up of ancient roots and destruction of all they had trusted in tempted men to bitter cynicism, to frank self-seeking, to reckless abandonment. Their Babylonian environment was a strange contrast to bare mountain ranges of Judæa, with the rigorous law, the earnest puritanism of their religion at its best. Here on the hot and fertile river plains of Mesopotamia, in close contact with a cultured idolatry joined to worldly magnificence and vice, they were in peril of losing all that they stood for as the world's pioneers of religion and morality. It was Ezekiel who saved the situation.

### **Preparing for Reconstruction.**

He commences at once the elaboration of a new theology, a popular restatement of religion. He combines with it a scheme of reconstruction should they ever return, and he adds to this the confident hope that they *will* have the opportunity of re-establishing the nation in Jerusalem. He therefore initiates and carries forward a preparative movement, in order that every plan may be completed and the people disciplined and instructed for the great day of release. His appeal was to individuals. Let them break away from the spirit of fatalism which held out no hope for any Jew; let them begin again; God did not want to destroy, but to redeem them.

The interned Englishmen in Ruhleben during the war escaped madness and despair only by an active utilisation of their captivity in preparation for their release. The response of the Hebrews to Ezekiel's appeal knit them together, gave them an object in life, something to do, to think about, to work for.

Ezekiel rescued a lost nation as a brand plucked from the burning.

### **The New Theology.**

The teaching of Ezekiel has not the same poetry and fire as that of the great prophets, neither has it that subtle allusiveness and those flashes of burning insight, hard to fathom and incalculably significant. Ezekiel is dogmatic and precise, and gives us plain theological doctrines. A people whose hearts had been softened, whose fallow ground had been broken up by bitter experience and by the fire and tears of Jeremiah, was receptive of the cool, detailed precepts of the literary teacher, whose written expositions could be read and mastered and quietly absorbed. Perhaps to some the mysterious visions and images which occupy so many chapters will seem anything but precise and plain, but really they are only like diagrams and illustrations, following the vivid pictorial

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imagery of the East, designed to illuminate and not to puzzle the reader.

Ezekiel has a peculiarly Calvinistic view of God's purposes. If Israel is never restored, the heathen will blaspheme; therefore, not for Israel's sake, but for the sake of His Holy Name, Israel shall be restored, first in spirit and righteousness, and then as a nation. "And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord . . . when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." This is not so artificial a doctrine as appears, neither is the Calvinistic doctrine of the fulfilment of God's purposes which is so similar. Both mean that it is an unhappy prospect if the world is ultimately a failure and no sanctified people of God possess it to His glory. Is such a final collapse of the plans of God conceivable?

### **Individual Responsibility.**

The way of restoration is open to those who accept individual responsibility, and, leaving the mass, decide for themselves to listen to the prophets and return to God. God is not inflexibly determined to destroy the whole of Israel, as many were inclined to think. To the Hebrew mind, once it was clear that God can no longer be regarded as the miraculous preserver of their fortunes, there was no hope at all for anybody. Ezekiel, developing the message of Jeremiah, declares that God has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth . . . wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." He goes on to deny the truth of the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." The just man, no matter what the sins of his fathers or neighbours, shall live and not die. If a good man falls into sin, his previous goodness will not excuse him; if a bad man repents, his previous sins will not condemn him, he shall be forgiven. This new doctrine of forgiveness is stated clearly and emphatically in chapter xviii. Hitherto ceremonial offences had been purged by sacrificial rites, but the great moral offences had meant final severance from the com-

munity and from God. For the first time the doctrine of forgiveness is clearly enunciated. We can imagine what a load it must have lifted from the shoulders of those Hebrews who were convinced of their past errors and weighed down by the conviction that there was no possible recovery now that God's judgment had fallen and there was no possible mistake as to their complete condemnation.

This doctrine lays a new responsibility on preachers and hearers. This is worked out in chapter iii. The preacher must give every man the opportunity of hearing the saving word of truth ; if he does this, it is the hearer who is now responsible for his own salvation. (See also xxxiii. 1-6.)

### **The Doctrine of the New Heart.**

The teaching of Jeremiah is again apparent in Ezekiel's gospel of the new heart. "I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh ; that they may walk in my statutes and keep mine ordinances and do them, and they shall be my people and I will be their God."

The converted Jews will be sought out by the Good Shepherd, separated from the goats, and restored to the fold (ch. xxxiv). The hope of an inbreathing of the divine Power into the dead bones of the broken people is beautifully set forth in the wonderful parable of chapter xxxvii.

### **Ecclesiastical Plans.**

Ezekiel's ecclesiastical schemes and minute regulations for the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of its worship are of less interest. Indeed, many are of the opinion that it marks the parting of the ways for Judaism. Here they turn from the freedom of the prophetic moral ideal to the bondage of a hard ecclesiastical legalism, ending in the pharisaism of the New Testament. On the other hand, it may be urged that the crystallising of

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the new moral standards of the prophets into a religious and moral code which could be enforced by the state was an inevitable stage in Hebrew development. (See Diagrams 7 and 8, Part IV.)

### **Literary Activity during the Exile.**

During the period of exile there was great literary activity in Babylon. Different schools of writers were busy piecing together and editing the greater part of the Old Testament as we know it; the early prophets and also *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah* were taking their final form. Priestly reformers were bringing out their own edition of the Scriptures filled with ecclesiastical comments and insertions in accord with the highly developed system of *Ezekiel*. The school of Deuteronomic reformers were re-writing Hebrew history in a similar spirit. Poets were composing and editing psalms. Mythologists were writing up stories of the origins of things such as we find in *Genesis*. Babylonian influence was not absent from these nor from many of the writings of the period. Curiously enough, *Daniel*, the one book we might at first glance ascribe to this school, does not belong to it at all, although its picture of the times is probably as accurate an account as we could desire. It was really written some two hundred years later, when the Persian Empire had long since disappeared and the Greek tyrants were persecuting the Jews. It was a religious and historical novel written to encourage them in their hour of trial.

### **II. Nehemiah.**

The opportunity for realising these plans came sooner than was expected. Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. In 538 B.C. Babylon fell before Cyrus, King of Persia, who allowed some of the exiles to return and commence the rebuilding of the Temple, Zerubbabel, a prince of the royal line, being appointed Governor. Assisted by those of their fellow-countrymen whom they found in or near



Jerusalem, some attempt was made to rebuild the city and the Temple. It needed, however, the earnest exhortations of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (whose short books should be read in this connection) to persuade the people to put forth the energy necessary for the rebuilding of the Temple. Even then the worship is slipshod and the general life of the community on a low level, as the criticisms of the prophet Malachi show only too well. The Temple was finished in 516 B.C. In 445 B.C. Nehemiah appears, and with vigour and enthusiasm rallies the whole people about him. The walls and gates are properly erected and the national life can now be resumed in isolation from corrupting foreign elements. Assisted by Ezra the Scribe, the Priestly Code first promulgated by Ezekiel is laid down as the basis of society, its enactments are publicly read and explained to the people, and with almost universal consent they are rigidly enforced. The ideal of the nation as a family had always been before the Jews, and is embodied in much of their legislation. Nehemiah, finding that certain men of wealth had lent money to their poorer neighbours on harsh terms, and had forced them to pledge or mortgage their possessions, lands, and even their children, commands that the debts shall be cancelled and usury abolished. He sternly rebukes the money-lenders for their unbrotherly conduct.

### **Jewish Exclusiveness.**

The other cause of contention was intermarriage with foreigners. In a somewhat harsh manner this was condemned and the "strange wives" with their children expelled. As a consequence of these reforms a recalcitrant minority of prominent citizens were also expelled from Jerusalem; they crossed into North Israel and settled around the ruins of Samaria. Mingled with the remnants of the northern Israelites, to whom we have already referred, they formed the Samaritans of New Testament times. The story of *Ruth* the Moabitess who married a Jew was written to oppose this exclusiveness.



**Reformation by Decree.**

Nehemiah was a really great man, a leader of courage and determination, with a firm faith in God and fervent loyalty to the new Jewish law. He was a dictator, resolute to impose the New Model and to reform by decree. If Ezekiel wrote the book and elaborated the scheme on paper (a right and necessary stage), Nehemiah was the practical reformer who put these theories into practice.

But again the doubt creeps in as to whether reform by books and decrees is the best way. It was the way the new Judaism, with its stern puritanism and fanatical nationalism, was set up; but was that really a gain? It may be replied that in practice there is nothing else to do when the time comes. People are as sheep, and when they are tired of being led by "false shepherds" (Ezekiel iii, iv) they turn to the idealist; it is just as great a temptation for him to dictate and decree as it was for his opponent.

**III. 2 Isaiah.**

However, we have the inkling of an alternative in the last great teachers in the Old Testament whose writings we have to consider—the anonymous authors of *Isaiah xl to lxvi* (known as *2 Isaiah*). These writers delivered their message, which was probably purely a written message, in the last years of the exile, during the reign of Cyrus, whom they welcomed as a divinely appointed deliverer, and from that time up to the time of Nehemiah. These writings are evidently the work of a school of thinkers deriving, like Ezekiel, their inspiration from Jeremiah, but, unlike him, pursuing a more spiritual and ideal method of fulfilling God's purposes. Ezekiel falls back on legalism, and his ideal reformer is Nehemiah the dictator. The authors of *2 Isaiah* think in terms of social conversion, and their ideal reformer is a suffering servant.

Again and again they declare that the ideal common-

wealth of God will only be established by this suffering servant. Who is he and what do they mean? An exposition of *2 Isaiah* cannot be attempted here, but we will suggest along what lines it points the way of reform.

### **The Suffering Servant.**

The Suffering Servant may in part refer back to Jeremiah and men of his type, for they are the true saviours of Israel, and only as we feel as they do and suffer as they do is the nation really helped. But he is also some future leader greater than Jeremiah and of an altogether different type from Nehemiah, who must come to carry out the great task of reconstruction. Reform is never satisfactory if it is only the imposition of a scheme, what is wanted is a *person* whose life and character will embody the new way of life, and who will therefore be a model, an inspiration and a leader of like-minded souls. This is not all: the Servant and Saviour will not only be a person, but a community, a new fellowship within the nation, of those who are utterly consecrated to God's purposes and righteous will—an expanding group including more and more within its ranks and spreading the new spirit by the method of leaven.

By this means reformation proceeds by conversion of the rank and file, instead of by legislation from without; not that the conversion will fail to register itself in legislation and in concrete reform, but the source of the revolution will be within.

The ideal leader and the ideal community for which they looked did not come for over four hundred years from the date of the first of these writings. It will be seen how necessary for a right understanding of Jesus and of His new fellowship, the Church, is a knowledge of the development of the Old Testament teaching and practical experience.

Finally, why the emphasis on suffering? It is here that we touch the deepest insight of the Old Testament. If coercion and dictatorship is surrendered, the alternative

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is submission to unrighteous and imperfect government until men have been individually convinced ; yet all the time truth and righteousness must be witnessed for, the goal of converted, not suppressed, enemies must be ever before us. This will mean persecution on the one hand and pitying sorrow on the other ; it will mean leaving people free to destroy themselves, others, and even ourselves, rather than coercing them even for the good of all.

This is the path the Suffering Servants must tread.

The author was not able to tell us that we should come to call it the Way of the Cross.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LAST FOUR HUNDRED YEARS

THE intervening four hundred years is, unfortunately, hardly represented in the Old Testament owing to the formation of a canon of authorised books which excluded many of great value. The course of history during this time is familiar to us because it is the great classical era of Greece and Rome. Greece conquered Persia in 331 B.C., and Greek colonies were established in Palestine. Definite attempts to Hellenise the Jews came to a head in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. The corruption of Greek paganism did as much to undermine Jewish morality and religion as the worship of the Baals and foreign deities had done in the days of their fathers. The savage persecution of Antiochus provoked armed rebellion which, under Judas Maccabæus, was successful in establishing Jewish independence for a century (until 63 B.C.). The fanatical courage of those who held to the law was in sad contrast to the surrender of many thousands to foreign influence. The final result was the schism of the state into two parties—the puritanical Pharisees and the latitudinarian Sadducees.

#### The Messianic Hope.

Both Isaiah and Ezekiel had looked forward to an ideal leader, a prince who would rule and a shepherd who would guide God's people. We have seen how *2 Isaiah* developed this conception and advanced the prophecy of the Suffering Servant. This hope gathers and develops, and can be traced in two distinct forms.

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First there is the ideal of the great prophets, a human ideal: the desired leader is to be a Hebrew prophet-king of humble origin who will establish righteousness and peace. Then there is the other form suggested in Ezekiel's declaration that God must vindicate His power before the nations and his prophecies of the coming prince who would bring about a great spectacular vindication of Jehovah's power (chapters xxxvi-xxxix). This miraculous and spectacular deliverance foretold in fantastic allegories and vivid images is called Apocalypse (i.e. revelation). We have beginnings of this in sections of *Joel* and *Zechariah*, but the greater part of *Daniel* is the one great example of an apocalyptic book in the Old Testament. Outside the Bible, however, there are many more of equal or greater value, most of which were written between 300 B.C. and 100 A.D. Their method is to place in the mouth of some ancient worthy like Enoch, Moses, Baruch, Ezra or Daniel an account of Hebrew history leading up to the period of the writer. Even this history is often told in a mysteriously symbolic manner; but when the writer goes on to foretell the future and the great deliverance to come his visions grow still wilder: beasts and horns and strange monsters appear, and then some great agent of God—the anointed one or Messiah who effects the final triumph.

Written in times of distress, the aim of these books was to encourage faith in God and faithful endurance in persecution. The day of triumph is variously conceived: it may be on earth or in heaven, the deliverer may be God, or a great Jewish prince, or a pre-existent being, or a representative man (a Son of Man), or simply Messiah (anointed one). Always it is those faithful to the law who are saved, moral qualifications are almost unmentioned.

These books, and others of a very different nature, show us that there were many strands of fertile Hebrew thought beyond the official legalism founded by Ezekiel and Ezra. The problem of suffering discussed in *Job*,



the curious agnosticism of *Ecclesiastes*, the noble hope of a converted paganism in *Jonah*, and the blessing of mixed marriages in *Ruth* (in flat contradiction to *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*), all point to varied traditions.

The *Psalms* also reflect a many-sided religious life of great depth and beauty. It was largely the religious *individuals* (perhaps loosely grouped into friendly gatherings), who were apart from official Judaism, whose minds were ready for the teaching of Jesus. Neither extreme Pharisaism nor extreme Apocalyptic would welcome Him. But all that was best in both movements and all that the noblest minds had consciously or unconsciously sifted out and absorbed from the thousand years of Hebrew religious experience combined to crystallise, first in a passionate yearning in those who, like the family of John the Baptist, Anna, Simeon, Joseph and Mary, looked and longed rightly for God's true Son, and finally in a loyal discipleship at His coming which, knit together by Paul and the Apostles in later years, still carries the traditions and achievements of Judaism down into the twentieth century—the Church of Christ.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE Christian Church, unfortunately, has never learnt to use the Old Testament rightly, and in consequence it has been a source of weakness as well as strength to this day. Only when the Church understands the Old Testament will it be in a position to understand Jesus and to put before the world the religion it needs for its salvation.

#### **Judaism in the Church.**

The Church has carried over the errors of the Jews almost as much as their achievements. The legalism and ecclesiasticism against which the prophets strove is still dominant in Christendom, the narrow nationalism and arrogant confidence of the chosen people is reflected in popular belief in England to-day, and its worst features are centred in the British Israel movement, proclaiming that the British are the ten lost tribes, and our economic superiority and military glory are sure signs of God's special providence. We are back in the days of Amos. (See Diagrams 7 and 8, Part IV.)

#### **Primitive Religion in the Twentieth Century.**

Even the idolatry and primitive superstitions of the Semites, which were slowly decaying under prophetic influence in Bible times, have come down to us and flourish to-day. The idea that the divine clings to sacred objects, the idea of ceremonial holiness, the idea of religious power as a kind of magical force flowing through arbitrary chosen

channels and irrespective of the moral condition of either priest or believer, are still prevalent.

The fundamental error of the Jews that worship of God can go on and continue to be acceptable, bringing safety and blessing, while the things the worshippers really want or believe in are material and military power, money and prosperity, personal pleasure and pride, still persists as strongly as in Jerusalem two thousand five hundred years ago.

Prayer and propitiation still tend to be a mere seeking of one's own ends from a Power which can be cajoled, persuaded, and even tricked by loud professions, elaborate services and public homage. In international politics alliances with any great Power, whether corrupt or not, is openly advocated by Christian politicians; trust, if not in horses and chariots, in guns and tanks is still the rule; and we have seriously to consider whether the policy of Isaiah is not applicable to our own day.

### **The Bible and Social Reform.**

In economics and in the tangle of social problems that beset us the new view of the Bible makes it plain that the prophets as social reformers will have definite guidance for us to-day.

The conviction that avarice, private enterprise, freedom to invest profitably, freedom to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market, are fundamentals which cannot be touched without peril to society, is seen to be true only of heathenism, not of the family of God's children, where the sacredness of personality transcends the sacredness of property.

### **Deep-Seated Corruption and its Cure.**

Finally, the profound pessimism of a Jeremiah as he looks at a nominally religious community, but sees only deep-seated corruption and inevitable disaster to the whole of civilisation, is the attitude of many of the true prophets of our own day. The last prophetic hope is not

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in a vast organised Church, but in a remnant of personally convinced believers, working not through impressive ecclesiastical machinery and the worldly powers of money, prestige and efficient organisation, above all not through compromise and acquiescence in the material and coercive methods of the world, but rather through unflinching witness to truth and righteousness and the power of suffering meekness.

### **Inerrancy.**

It has been the unfortunate belief in the inerrancy of the Old Testament, in the theory that every book and chapter is of equal value, that it is infallible and final in its revelation of truth, that is largely responsible for the carrying over of the crudities and errors of the Hebrews into Christendom. It has been declared during the war by sincere clergymen that the imprecatory psalms and the primitive acceptance of massacre as the will of God which we find in the early historical books, while once rather a problem, have now become a positive delight. This rediscovery of the Old Testament is a mere slipping back into the outgrown barbarities of primitive man.

### **Popular Ignorance of the Bible and its Cause.**

The vast amount of popular superstition and ignorance on religious matters on the one hand, and the inevitable contempt for the moral and intellectual crudities of conventional religious thought on the other, are also due to this unscholarly and untrue view of the Old Testament.

Dr. Herbert Gray, in his vivid and compelling sketch of the religion of the British soldier, *As Tommy Sees Us*, truly says:—

“Surely it is wholly pathetic that men who would fain rest in the comfort of a Christian faith should to this day be worrying about the parable of Jonah and his annoying whale or about the historicity of the early chapters in *Genesis*, or about the quaint idea that there

is science in the Old Testament, which ought somehow to be capable of reconciliation with modern science. No theological student has any trouble with such matters, but we have not yet delivered even the rising generation from these futile and irrelevant controversies.

“Nor are these small matters by any means. It may be questioned whether anything has more hindered the final ascendancy of Jesus in the world for which He died than just the failure of the Church more openly to repudiate all that is not Christian in the Old Testament. The Old Testament, wrongly conceived, has had a vogue in the belligerent countries during this war which has been nothing short of calamitous. Men have not been conscious of open disloyalty to Christ when they have allowed themselves to think about international affairs in the spirit of an ignorant and vindictive Hebrew of the early pre-Christian centuries. And so the world has spurned the way into its peace.”

### **Internationalism.**

True internationalism we do not fully reach in the Old Testament, but the great prophets in flashes of insight did glimpse it. Isaiah, Hosea, the authors of *2 Isaiah*, Zechariah, and above all Jonah, saw more than the triumph of one tiny nation as God's final purpose, and spoke of the goal of history as that commonwealth of God where “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn any more war.” “And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . and he will teach us of his way, and we will walk in his paths.” “My house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples.” “And nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” In that day the Lord shall say: “Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands,” for “I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.” “He shall not fail nor be dis-



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couraged till he have set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for his law.”<sup>1</sup> For them, as for all the followers of Jesus, the pilgrimage that those earliest seekers after God first adventured upon was to lead not only the Jews but the world into a knowledge of truth and righteousness until “the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

<sup>1</sup> Isa. ii. 1-4 ; lvi. 7 ; lx. 3 ; xix. 21. Hosea ii. 23. Isa. xlii. 4. See also Isa. xxv. 6 ; xi. 10. Zech. viii. 20-23 ; xiv. 16.

*PART III*

TEACHING METHODS



## CHAPTER I

### BOOKS RECOMMENDED

EVERY student or teacher should endeavour to collect at least three or four first-rate books on the Old Testament to which it will be possible to turn with certainty to find fuller details on any topic that can be given in a book like this, which aims chiefly at building up a point of view. Books are of two kinds: books of facts and books which may be described as suggestive. We shall need both.

We do not propose to give an exhaustive bibliography but only an irreducible minimum of fairly cheap books. This must include a sound Old Testament history; a book dealing with the higher criticism of the Bible, i.e. questions of the date, authorship and sources of the various books; a general description of the great civilisations with which Israel had to do; and possibly a book on the geography of Palestine. At least one good book on the prophets or on Old Testament theology is also indispensable.

The following list may be helpful:—

*Biblical History of the Hebrews*, by Foakes Jackson. Takes full account of modern criticism. Detailed, clear and accurate.

As an alternative one of the following might be chosen:—

*History of the Hebrews*, by Ottley (Cambridge University Press).

*A History of the Hebrew People*, by Kent. (Two volumes.)

*Old Testament History and Literature*, by Alford. (Longmans.)

The last combines a first-rate history from the time of David onwards, with a brief account of Old Testament literature, and would be enough for most people.

If a more detailed study of the books of the Bible is required, one of the following should be purchased:

*The Literature of the Old Testament*, by Moore (Home University Library).

*A Biblical Introduction*, by Bennett and Adeney.

On neighbouring civilisations there is nothing to surpass.

*Lands and People of the Bible*, by Baikie (A. & C. Black).

Well illustrated. This includes several chapters on the Geography of Palestine, but a handy little textbook on this subject is:

*The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, by Macphail (T. & T. Clark).

*Philip's Scripture Atlas* will be of service.

Some suggestive book on Old Testament religion should also be read:—

*The Religion of the Semites*, by Robertson Smith, is a classic. It links the primitive religion of the Hebrews to that of primitive man in general.

*The Prophets of Israel*, by Robertson Smith.

*The Story of the Prophets of Israel*, by Wood (Adult School Union) is very good, but is unfortunately out of print.

*The Religion of Israel*, by A. S. Peake. (Out of print.)

*The Oracles of God*, by W. E. Orchard, D.D.

An excellent book on the Minor Prophets.

*Prophecy and Religion*, by John Skinner, D.D.

A book that will one day rank as a classic.

Of these the two most indispensable volumes are:—

*Old Testament History and Literature*, by Alford.

*Lands and People of the Bible*, by Baikie.

It would cost no more than these three books to purchase a most remarkable volume recently published by T. C. & E. C. Jack at 10s. and edited by Professor Peake, which comprises a complete Old and New Testament handbook, and includes long and ably-written articles by the greatest living scholars on every conceivable topic. Most of the information in the above-mentioned books is included, and the contents are quite free from any suspicion of scrappiness. It includes a complete commentary on the Bible and admirable introductions to every book. Its title is *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*.

We can also warmly recommend the following translations of Old Testament books into colloquial English—

*Jeremiah*, by Professor Adam Welch (1s. 3d.)

*Genesis*, by Professor Robinson (1s.)

*Amos*, by Professor Robinson (6d.)

These are all published by the Adult School Union, 30, Bloomsbury Street, London.



## CHAPTER II

### HOW TO MARK YOUR BIBLE

THE use of the Bible itself is most important. Until a modern annotated translation or a useful *Shorter Old Testament* is forthcoming <sup>1</sup> we must do as well as we can with the Revised Version. For the purposes of study a small pocket Bible with microscopic type is not much use ; the type should be as large as possible, and if margins for notes are obtainable so much the better.

The Bible should be freely marked. Where two accounts of one event are blended, each should be marked in a different colour (coloured pencils or ink). Passages added by later writers or editors should be underlined, and a distinguishing note added in the margin, D. or P., as the case may be, or simply X.

Passages of beauty and insight, the most notable sayings of the prophets, verses betraying some primitive custom or antiquated idea, should also be marked.

No amount of reading about the Bible will take the place of actual reading of the Bible itself ; not cursory reading, but slow, patient and thoughtful reading, and there is nothing that conduces to that more than to read pen in hand, ready to mark every striking phrase.

<sup>1</sup> Kent's *Shorter Old Testament* has now been published by Hodder & Stoughton, and is exactly what is required. Price 10s. 6d.

## CHAPTER III

### ILLUSTRATIONS

#### **Pictures.**

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION (Ludgate Hill), the offices of TEACHERS AND TAUGHT (4, Fleet Lane, Farringdon Street), and the NATIONAL SOCIETY all provide both coloured illustrations of Bible events and photographs and diagrams of supplementary matter. The coloured illustrations suitable for class use should only be purchased after inspection, as most of them are useless. The whole series of TEACHERS AND TAUGHT *Outlines and Pictures for Class Use* are worth getting. Also the similar series published by the NATIONAL SOCIETY, which are invaluable except for the pictures of actual Bible stories, which are bad.

The *British Museum Handbooks* to the Egyptian and Babylonian and Assyrian antiquities are beautifully illustrated and most useful; they are also remarkably cheap. Picture postcards of Assyrian inscriptions can be obtained.

(TEACHERS AND TAUGHT Catalogue should be written for.)

#### **The Lantern.**

Nothing adds interest to a course of lessons on the Bible more than an occasional lantern lecture; such lectures are quite as helpful for adult as for junior classes. The following lectures may be obtained from such lantern slide depots as the WESLEYAN METHODIST SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, Ludgate Circus, or MESSRS. NEWTON of King Street, Covent Garden, at hire prices

from 2s. to 3s. per dozen per night. MESSRS. NEWTON also sell a cheap and efficient electric lantern for classroom use which can be thoroughly recommended.

The Geography of Palestine (a large selection)	..	..	..	..	W.M.S.S.U. and Newton.
Assyrian Sculptures	..	..	..	..	Newton.
Egypt	..	..	..	..	W.M.S.S.U. and Newton.
Jerusalem (a large selection)	..	..	..	..	W.M.S.S.U. and Newton.
The Bible: Its Origin, Growth and Descent	..	..	..	..	W.M.S.S.U. and Newton.
The Book and Its Story	..	..	..	..	W.M.S.S.U. and Newton.
Copping's Scripture Series	..	..	..	..	W.M.S.S.U. and Newton.
Shield's Bible Pictures	..	..	..	..	W.M.S.S.U. and Newton.
Scripture Natural History	..	..	..	..	Newton.
Everyday Life in the Holy Land (Neil)					W.M.S.S.U.
Manners and Customs of Eastern Lands					W.M.S.S.U.

The selection of other lantern slides illustrating Bible history should be by personal inspection (as with the pictures), as most of the slides are inaccurate, inartistic and sentimental. There are, however, hundreds to choose from, and quite enough first-rate slides can be obtained to illustrate any Bible course.

## CHAPTER IV

### A SYLLABUS OF OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS

THE specialist is very apt, in drawing up a syllabus for day-school or Sunday-school, to give his own subject far too large a share of the limited time at the disposal of the class. We shall try to avoid that pitfall, if only because we are as interested in the other subjects as in the Old Testament. Whether in Sunday-school or Adult School, we have to remember not only that the New Testament must claim its place, but that no modern Sunday-school or Adult School has a complete programme until foreign missions, church history and industrial history have found their place also.<sup>1</sup>

We hope this suggestion will not be considered too staggering. There are schools where such a scheme is being successfully worked, and the present volume is, we hope, but the first of a series dealing in a similar manner with these further subjects.

We must therefore telescope Old Testament history into a compact whole, and leave out everything but critical men and events in our study.

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF A GRADED SYLLABUS.

##### 1. The Sunday-School.

The aim of the course will be to secure for children from the age of ten to the age of sixteen the teaching of the Old Testament on the lines suggested in this book.

<sup>1</sup> We must also leave room for the Supplemental Courses suggested in Chapter V.

*Primary* (ages eight to ten).

For this age we suggest a separate course of dramatic stories, myths and legends, without any attempt to link them into an historical series. The more vivid material is absorbed during this time the better it will be for the subsequent courses. Lessons on "Boys and Girls of Other Days" will allow opportunities for explaining Arab and desert life, Egyptian and Jewish manners and customs, etc. Pictures and models will be used to the fullest extent.

*Junior* (ages ten to twelve).

The children of ten to twelve or thirteen may be taught together in fairly large classes, provided a separate room is available and a competent teacher is engaged in the work; probably thirty would not be too many.

This, we are well aware, is an alternative to the scheme whereby young teachers, after attending a training class, take quite a small class of six or seven, in which case the lessons in this syllabus would first be given by the leader of his department to his staff.

The junior course will cover the whole of Old Testament history in two years, the first year dealing with the Romantic Period, to the end of David's reign, the second year with the Historical Period, to the fall of Jerusalem.

The third year could either begin again and cover the period down to David (with some slight variations if desired), or the material could easily be spread over three years, in view of the other material mentioned above, which claims its place.

The whole programme could be arranged in courses lasting from four to six weeks each, Biblical and non-Biblical courses alternating, roughly as follows:—

Six weeks.	The Desert Period and Palestine.
Three weeks.	Children of Other Lands (missionary motive).
Six weeks.	The Conquest of Palestine to Samuel and Saul.
Six weeks.	Heroes of the Middle Ages (Church history).
Four weeks.	David.
Four weeks.	Supplemental Course.*
Four weeks.	Social and Religious Conditions in Palestine.

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\* See Chapter V.



This leaves eighteen Sundays for New Testament and other subjects, or, if a year and a half is taken over this part, even longer. The second part will require about the same number of lessons to bring the history down to the fall of Jerusalem, not very much being said about the prophets at this stage.

*Intermediate* (ages thirteen to fifteen).

In none of these grades is an exact age limit insisted on; this grade may include children of thirteen or may consist wholly of fourteen-year-olds. The first part of the course, extending over a year or more, will be on the prophets in their historical setting, and the second part will carry the history from the exile to the Maccabees, various non-Biblical courses alternating.

*Senior* (ages sixteen to seventeen).

The senior class will deal with special topics covering wide stretches of history, such as "The Conflict of Hebrew Religion with Paganism," "The Changing Idea of God in the Old Testament," lessons on the *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Job* and other books, and supplemental courses.

## 2. The Day-School.

The above syllabus requires but slight adaptation to day-school work. A four years' course (ages ten to fourteen) will run as follows:—

1. Romantic Period to David.
2. Historical Period, Solomon to Fall of Jerusalem.
3. The Prophets and the Restoration (to Maccabees).
4. Special Topics (see p. 171).

Supplemental courses of three or more lessons will be arranged on—

1. Palestine.
2. Bible Races.
3. How We Got our Bible, etc.

### 3. Adult School.

For the Adult School I have found short courses of three or four Bible studies quite enough at a time. Six of these can be got into the year, and the general programme might work out somewhat as follows:—

1. Three Lectures. Jewish History to David.
2. One Lecture. Primitive Religion in Palestine.
3. Three Lectures. Jewish History from Solomon to the Fall of Jerusalem.
4. Two Lectures. The Literature of the Bible.
5. Three Lectures. The Hebrew Prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah).
6. One Lecture. Palestine.
7. Three Lectures. Jewish History from Nehemiah to Maccabees.
8. Three Lectures. Changing Ideas of God, etc.

These lectures would not follow one another in one continuous series, but would be broken up, each little course being followed up by one on some non-Biblical subject.

The Valuable *Adult School Handbook* and the lessons appointed by the National Council might possibly clash with such a scheme, but occasionally it would fit in very well, or schools might feel disposed to drop the Handbook for a few weeks occasionally and substitute a course of this description where a suitable lecturer can be found. An Adult School "Lecture Secretary" could arrange for two, three or four short Bible courses of this description each year. In a school with a fairly sound knowledge of the outline of Biblical History (are there any such schools?) the Topical Lectures will prove the most interesting. Further suggestions for these will be found on p. 171.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON

REFERENCE has been made in Part I and in the discussion on the Syllabus to special lessons on supplemental topics. A few suggestions as to possible courses may be useful.

The additional light on the background of Biblical history and literature which such lectures give us is almost essential.

In fact, the added interest to the Bible will in many cases make just the difference.

#### 1. Biblical Geography.

Palestine is no ordinary country, and its peculiar geographical features have an important bearing on its history. A useful brown-paper wall map, 30 inches by 40 inches, could be obtained for 1s. from TEACHERS AND TAUGHT (it is made by Johnson). A cross-section drawn on the blackboard is absolutely essential; one may be copied from TEACHERS AND TAUGHT Maps and Outlines (4d. per packet). A few picture postcards and illustrations obtainable from the offices already mentioned may be passed round the class, or lantern slides may be shown.

Small class pictures of Jerusalem are also obtainable, and are quite necessary to a lecture on the subject.

*The lantern lectures already mentioned are admirable.*

#### 2. The Bible.

The lantern lectures on *How We Got Our Bible* make it exceedingly easy for those without much expert knowledge to give an instructive lesson on this subject. Failing

the lantern, much may be done by the aid of the black-board and the *Outlines and Pictures for Class Use*. Lessons should also be given on :—

1. *The Bible as a Great Library*. Discriminating between history, poetry, legend and allegory.
2. *How the Book of Genesis was Written*. A lesson on "Sources" and the analysis of a composite narrative into its component parts. (See Diagram 1.)
3. *The Songs and Poetry of the Bible*.
4. *Ancient Creation Myths*. A comparison of Genesis with other accounts of the origin of things.

It is not difficult to work up a lecture from one of the many short and well-written handbooks on these subjects, such as :—

- The Bible in the Light of the Higher Criticism*, by Bennett and Adeney (People's Books, 1s.).
- How We Got Our Bible*, by Paterson Smyth (Sampson Low, Marston, 1s. 6d.).
- The Bible in the Making*, by Paterson Smyth (Sampson Low, Marston, 2s. 6d.).
- The Early Religious Poetry of the Hebrews*, by King (Cambridge Press, 2s. 6d.).
- Praises with Understanding*. A book about the Psalms, by Hollis (S.P.C.K., 2s. 6d.).
- The Old Testament in the Light of the Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Thomas (Black, 3s. 6d.). Various accounts of Creation, Flood, etc.

### 3. Bible Races.

1. Life in Ancient Egypt.
2. The Babylonians and Assyrians.
3. Who were the Philistines?
4. Life in the Desert.
5. Bible Manners and Customs.

For all these lectures, pictures and lantern slides are essential.

### Books.

- Bible Manners and Customs*, by Mackie (A. & C. Black, 6d.).
- A History of Civilisation in Palestine*, by Macalister (Cambridge Press, 2s. 6d.).
- Life in Olden Times in Babylonia and Assyria*, by Trotter (Macdonald & Evans, 1s. 6d.).
- Lands and People of the Bible*, by Baikie (A. & C. Black).

**British Museum Visits.**

London schools should certainly visit the Assyrian Galleries of the British Museum. Guide lecturers take round parties free of charge and give special talks on "The Bible and Ancient Inscriptions."

An interesting little guide-book from the Biblical point of view is *Why and What in the British Museum*, by Lettice Bell (Morgan & Scott, 1s. 6d.).

Material for all the above topics will also be found in *Peake's Bible Commentary* (T. C. & E. C. Jack, 10s.).

## CHAPTER VI

### MODEL COURSES

#### 1. Five Lessons on David and His Times.

- (a) *Social Conditions of the Early Kingship.* Unsettled state of country. Bedouin and Philistine raids. The king as chieftain. Buildings, cities, agriculture. Social distinctions slight. Laws and customs.
- (b) *Religious Conditions of the Early Kingship.* Popular sacrificial feasts. Baals or spirits of fertility. Primitive conceptions of God. Tribal rites. Priests. Prophets. Seers. Superstitions.
- (c) *David Building up His Kingdom.* Legends of David's youth. His patient struggle after Saul's death. His wars. Capture of Jerusalem. The Ark.
- (d) *David as a Ruler.* Kindness to Mephibosheth. Trade with Tyre. His officers of State. His heroes and their exploits. David's character. The prosperity of his kingdom.
- (e) *David in Trouble.* Uriah the Hittite. Nathan. Absalom. The Great Rebellion. Psalms and last words of David.

#### 2. Topical Course : Changing Ideas of God.

- (a) *The Religion of the Desert.* Ideas of God. Sacrifice. Sacred spots. Stories illustrating this from lives of Abraham and Moses. Superiority to religion of other nomads.
- (b) *The Religion of the Early Settlement in Canaan.* Changes and improvements in the idea of God. The Holy Wars. Canaanite influence, good and bad. Differences from Canaanite religion. The Ark.
- (c) *Religion under the Monarchy.* The Temple and the high places. Changes in worship. Influence of Tyre. Influence of Elijah. The policy of exclusiveness.
- (d) *Religious Reform.* Josiah and *Deuteronomy*. Where the old is surpassed. Influence of Amos. God and social justice. Influence of Isaiah. Loftier conceptions of God. Changes in worship.
- (e) *Post Exilic Religion.* The priesthood and the law. Elements finally discarded. Improvements. Dangers. Doubters: Job and Ecclesiastes. Loftier ideals than those of Jewish orthodoxy: Jonah and Isaiah.



Both courses need to be more than abstract lectures; they must contain plenty of concrete Biblical material.

### 3. Supplemental Course: The Bible as a Library.

- (a) *The Library of the Jews.* What is a library? What different kinds of books does it contain? The earliest library in David's time. The Jewish library at the Exile. The lost books of the Jews. One *type* of book preserved, though every kind of literature within that type.
- (b) *Legend and Myth.* Before writing, the bards, traditions. The value of legend. The beauty of myth. Greek and Scandinavian examples. King Arthur. St. Francis. Where does legend end and history begin? Typical examples.
- (c) *History.* What is history? Need for documents. Inscriptions. Vanished history books. Biblical history not impartial. Kings. Influence of *Deuteronomy*. Exile history.

Further courses could be drawn up dealing with—

- (a) The Law Books of the Jews.
- (b) Prophecy.
- (c) Poetry.
- (d) Wisdom Literature—Allegory, etc.

We do not attempt to disguise the fact that teaching the Bible is not a task for untrained hands. A few minutes with a "Lesson Help" and a Bible after dinner on Sunday is not enough.

But the earnest worker of average ability will not find the task beyond him if he is prepared to work hard, "scorn delights and live laborious days." The devastating effects of bad Sunday-school teaching are seen to-day in the appalling ignorance not only of those who have passed through our Sunday-schools, but also of those who have afterwards become Church members.

The Modern Graded School is a vast improvement, but as its founder, Mr. George Hamilton Archibald, himself constantly assures us, "the good is the enemy of the best." Department leaders must be trained, either self-trained or by the West Hill Training College and similar institutions. The teacher training courses must not only

deal with story-telling methods, but must deal thoroughly with the whole question of the modern meaning of the Bible, and must train in practical ability in digging out material and working up lessons with up-to-date equipment in the way of handbooks.

We could do with more week-end schools at various provincial and metropolitan centres, and we should have as soon as possible Easter and Whitsun and Summer Schools for Adult School teachers and day-school teachers.

With competent teachers available, plenty of scholars would be found, and the teaching of the Bible in the twentieth century would be placed on a new footing.

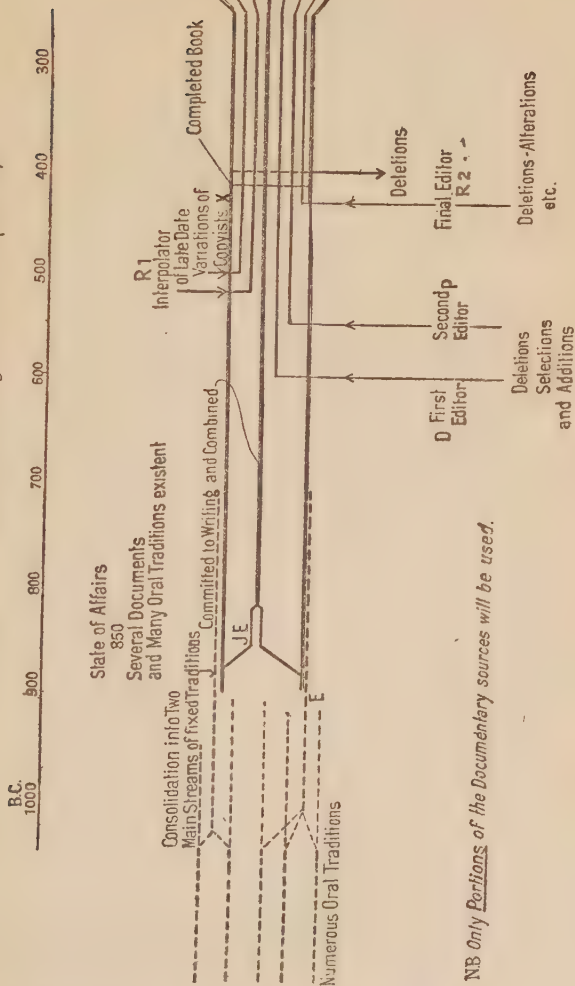


*PART IV*  
**DIAGRAMS**



# THE EVOLUTION OF A HEBREW BOOK (GENESIS)

(For an explanation of this Diagram see Chapter III.)

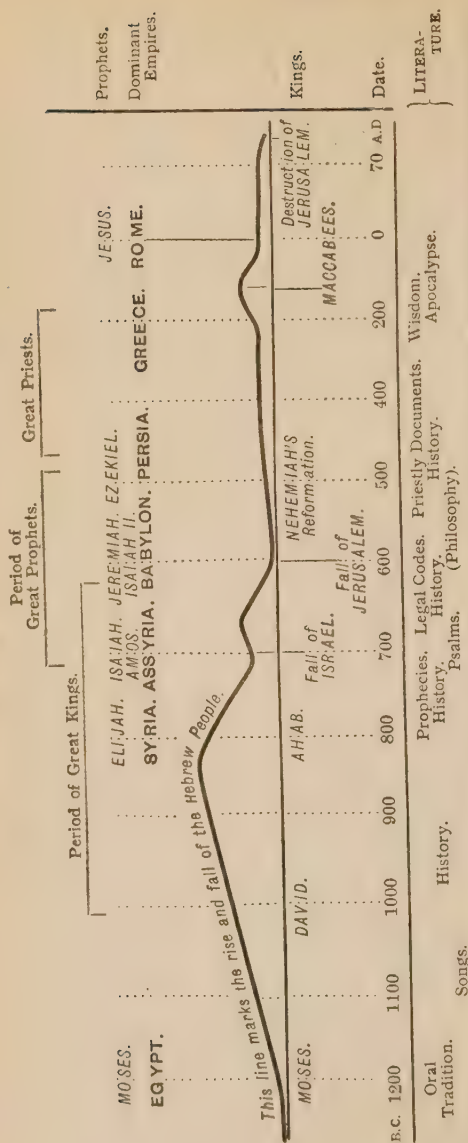


NB Only Portions of the Documentary sources will be used.

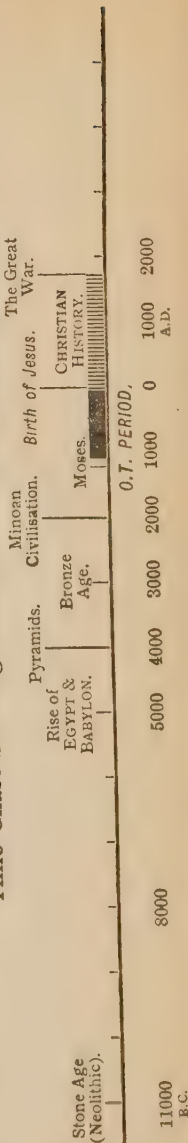
(For explanation of diagram, see Chapter III, p. 34.)



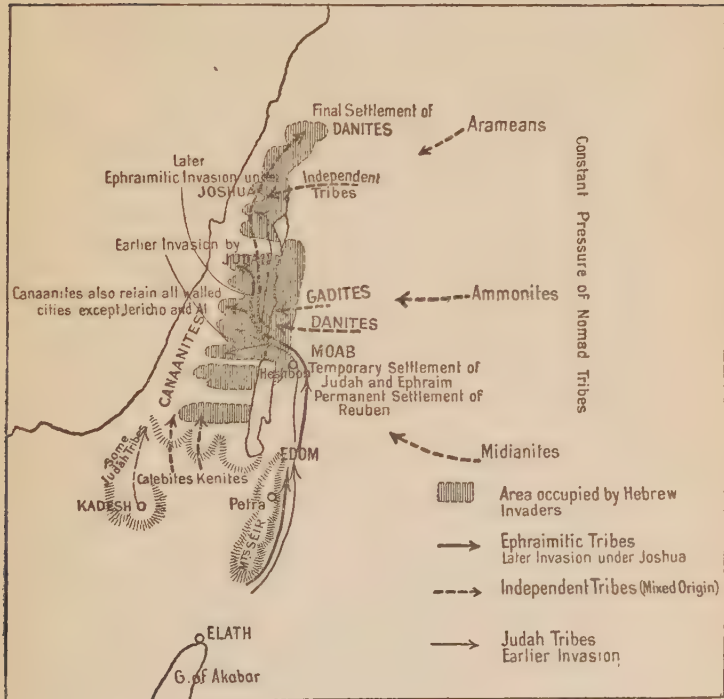
## No. 2.—OUTLINE OF BIBLICAL HISTORY.



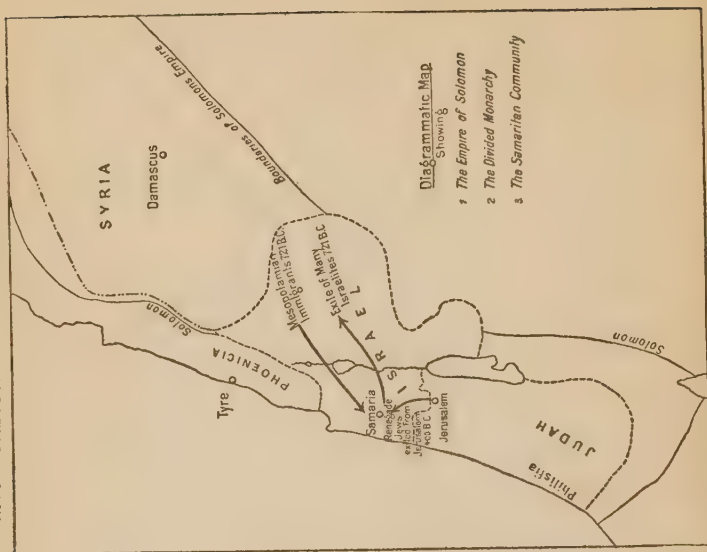
## Time Chart Showing Period Covered by Hebrew History.



No3 HEBREW INVASIONS OF PALESTINE.

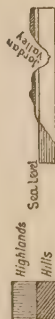


No 4 b PALESTINE: THE DIVIDED KINGDOM.

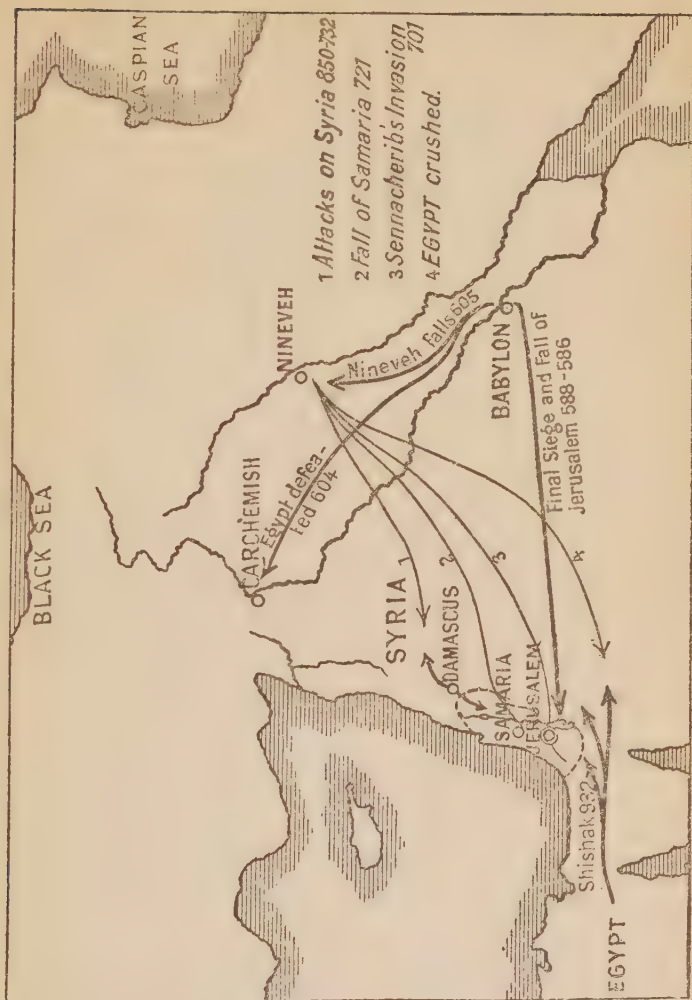


No 4 a CONTOUR MAP OF PALESTINE.

Showing contrast of lowlands of Israel with highlands of Judah

Section A B  
Across ISRAELSection C D  
Across JUDAHNote also Jordan valley well below sea level

# No5 FOREIGN INVASIONS OF PALESTINE.





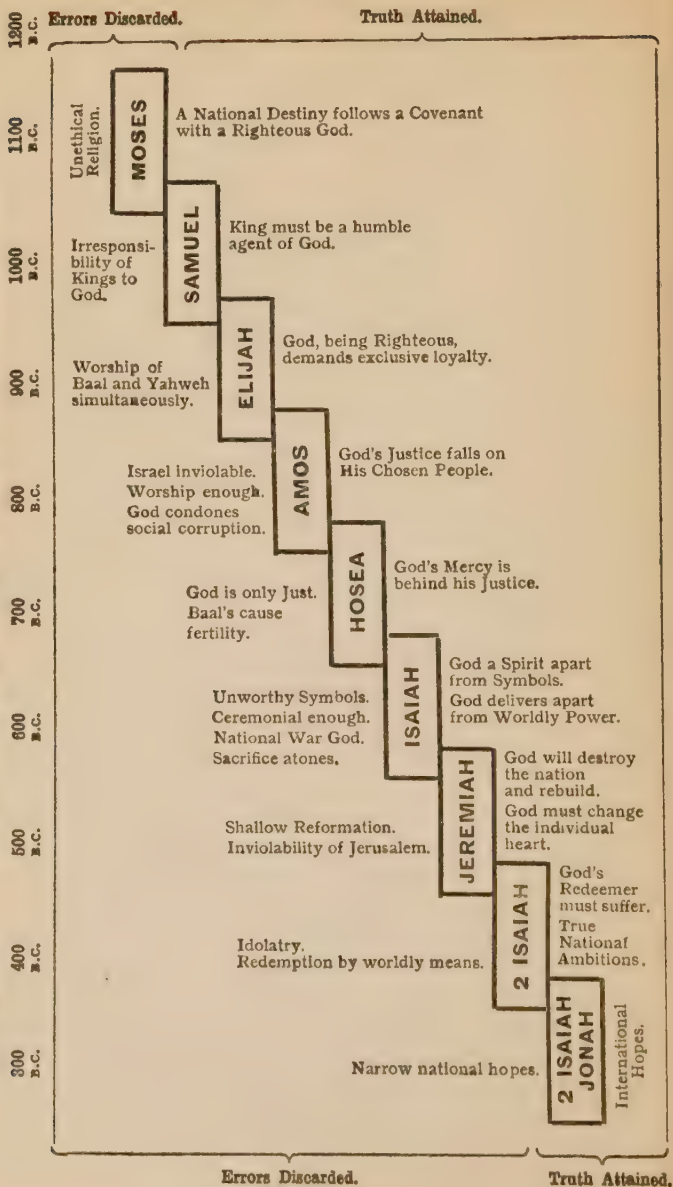
No. 7.—CORRUPT ELEMENTS IN HEBREW RELIGION.

MISTAKEN OR CORRUPT ELEMENTS IN HEBREW RELIGION.	RULERS AND KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.									
	David. B.C. 1000	Ahab. 900	Jeroboam II. 800	Hezekiah. 700	Josiah. 600	Ezra, Jehoiakim. 500	Nehemiah. 400	The Great High Priests. 300	200	
Witchcraft and spiritism ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Divining ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Primitive animism ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Material ideas of the sacred ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Religion as tribal patriotism ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Families punished together—"devoted" ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Holy wars and massacres ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Worship as placation ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Worship as cajolery ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Licentious worship ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Ceremonial worship ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Legalism ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Priestcraft ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Phœnician Baal worship ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Other pagan cults, stars, etc. ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Human sacrifice ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
False prophecy ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Unworthy fear in religion ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Holiness as taboo ..	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
<hr/>										
	B.C. 1000	900	800	700	600	500	400	300	200	
	Nathan. Samuel.	Elijah. Elisha:	Amos. Isaiah.	Hosea. Micah.	Jeremiah. Ezekiel.	2 Isaiah.	Ezra.	Jonah.	Book of Daniel.	
PROPHETS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.										

(The dotted line marks the decline of error, the unbroken line denotes its existence.)



## No. 8.—PROGRESS OF HEBREW RELIGION.

*Showing Discarding of Error and Growth of True Ideas due to Prophetic Influence.*

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